

End of degree project.

**THE OVERWHELMING EFFECTS OF TEXTUAL ENHANCEMENT
IN 5TH GRADERS' WRITTEN PERFORMANCE.**

**ELS EFECTES ACLAPARADORS DE LA MANIPULACIÓ TEXTUAL
A L'EXPRESSIÓ ESCRITA DELS ALUMNES DE 5^È DE PRIMÀRIA.**

Rut Parella Dilmé

Tutor: Dra. Julie Waddington

Course 2020 – 2021

5th Double degree in pre-primary and primary education

Facultat d'Educació i Psicologia

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A heartfelt thank you to Glòria and Maite, whose kindness has been endless.

A special and grateful appreciation to Julie for her guidance throughout the project.

And finally, to Marina, my university best friend who encouraged me although not seeing each other as much as we wished.

CONTENTS

Abstract	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Literature review	7
2.1 Input and Textual Enhancement.....	7
2.2 Negative impact of Textual Enhancement.....	8
2.3 No impact of Textual Enhancement.....	9
2.4 Positive impact of Textual Enhancement.....	9
3. Method	11
3.1 Research question and aims.....	11
3.2 Participants.....	11
3.3 Materials of data collection.....	12
3.4 Procedure.....	13
3.5 Data analysis.....	15
4. Results	17
4.1 Improvement between non-enhanced and enhanced reading comprehensions.....	17
4.2 Average scores in non-enhanced and enhanced reading passages.....	19
4.3 Comprehension in non-enhanced and enhanced reading passages.....	20
5. Discussion and conclusions	22
6. References	26

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Personal questionnaire.....	29
ANNEX 2: Multiple-choice test.....	30
ANNEX 3: Non-enhanced reading comprehension.....	31
ANNEX 4: Enhanced reading comprehension.....	33
ANNEX 5: Assessment criteria reading comprehensions.....	35

ABSTRACT

The present study addresses how a textually enhanced reading comprehension affects EFL learners' written performance. A total of 51 participants, 5th graders from the public-school Sant Salvador d'Horta, completed two reading passages: a non-modified text and a comprehension with Textual Enhancement (TE) instances. Scorings were quantified and statistically compared regarding improvement, average grading, and comprehension. Overall results show that learners performed greatly better in the non-enhanced passage, suggesting the TE negatively affected their written performance. However, EFL competence appears to be a factor that could increase or lessen this impact. The study eventually interprets that such findings were due to a too highly modified reading passage, which leads to the discussion of further implications about EFL classroom contexts.

Keywords: Textual Enhancement, written performance, EFL, primary education.

RESUM

L'objectiu d'aquest estudi és analitzar la manera com la manipulació física del text afecta l'expressió escrita de l'Anglès com a Llengua Estrangera. 51 alumnes de 5è de Primària de l'escola Sant Salvador d'Horta van realitzar dues comprensions lectores: amb un text bàsic i amb un text físicament modificat. Les tasques es van corregir numèricament i l'avaluació es va comparar estadísticament segons el grau de millora, la nota mitjana i el nivell de comprensió. Els resultats de la recerca evidencien que el desenvolupament de la comprensió lectora bàsica va ser molt millor que l'altra, fet que indica que la tècnica aplicada va intervenir negativament en l'expressió escrita dels participants. No obstant això, s'observa com la competència lingüística estrangera és una variable que pot ajudar a incrementar o disminuir aquest impacte. Finalment, s'interpreta que aquests resultats s'han produït perquè la segona comprensió lectora es va modificar en excés, incís que es relaciona amb decisions a prendre a les aules d'Anglès.

Paraules clau: Manipulació textual, expressió escrita, Anglès com a Llengua Estrangera, Educació Primària.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout decades the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has been gaining much attention due to its main challenge to develop the theory that adequately explains how SLA occurs. Between the 1950s and 1970s, neither the behaviourist nor the innatist perspective were persuasive enough. It was in the 1990s when cognitive theories emphasized “the role of general human abilities to process and learn information – including language – on the basis of experience” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p.113).

Nowadays, primary Catalan schools provide learners with a linguistic context in which English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL). Rather than acquiring the language in a naturalistic context, students are immersed in classroom settings which, apparently, aim to be characterized as communicative instructional environments. As reported by Lightbown & Spada (2013) “through focusing on meaning, learners will acquire the language in a way that is similar to natural acquisition” (p.127) but concerns have arisen about the importance and timing for grammar instruction.

It might not be a matter of whether relevance should be given to linguistic competence but rather, the manner it should be addressed: isolated or integrated. As the former implies drawing “the learner’s attention to form separately from communicative practice and activities” (Spada, 2011, p.229), the latter entails drawing “the learner’s attention to form within communicative practice and activities” (Spada, 2011, p.229). Henceforth, focusing on form while focusing on meaning is feasible if it does not impede communication.

Regarding this domain, throughout my Practicum II experience, a challenging problem arose. On the one hand, I realised that 5th graders struggled when dealing with Catalan grammar explicit abilities. For example, some students did not identify the noun or verb phrase in simple L1 sentences or could not distinguish the head. On the other hand, in their English lessons, I also observed that grammar concepts – simple present and continuous patterns – were taught explicitly, and pupils troubled when writing simple sentences. For instance, they were not able to include

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

the 3rd person singular -s in simple present sentences or the present continuous structure in ongoing actions.

Therefore, I wondered if, in this specific educational context, 5th graders were ready to learn EFL grammar explicitly. I assumed it was a too ambitious task and it was of interest to know the manner I could implicitly draw students' attention to form while being engaged on meaning-focused exercises. My personal goal was to overcome the students' written performance difficulties without missing opportunities to acquire the expected grammar concepts. Consequently, I decided to investigate if Input Enhancement could be implemented as a pedagogical strategy to accomplish this underlying aim. More precisely, I attempted to analyse Textual Enhancement effectiveness regarding 5th graders written performance when engaged in a reading comprehension task.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 Input and Textual Enhancement:

After assuming that grammatical instruction was not enough for L2 learners to achieve high L2 competence, in the 1970s communicative approaches were proposed. Classroom settings began to emphasize the importance of meaning, interaction and communication to learn the target language (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). However, in the 1990s, SLA research realised that such emphasis on meaning was not enough either. Thus, different pedagogic techniques emerged to promote focus on form and achieve, simultaneously, the acquisition of content and form (Lee, 2007).

Whereas some approaches were more explicit than others, Input Enhancement (IE) is a “relatively implicit type of focus on form strategy” (Loewen & Inceoglu, 2016, p.90). It was first proposed by Michael Sharwood Smith (1993) and involves, either in aural or visual input, reinforcing the saliency of certain linguistic features to achieve noticing. It is directly related to Richard Schmidt's “Noticing Hypothesis” (Schmidt, 1990), which states that although noticing does not straightforwardly result in acquisition, language learners must be aware of specific L2 linguistic elements to enhance the learning process (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Therefore, it could be assumed that in EFL contexts, L2 input might be slightly modified to achieve this awareness.

Regarding written input, the term Textual Enhancement (TE) is used. Correspondingly, it considers that through visually or physically manipulating the input, students' attention would be drawn to the target items, “increasing the chances that they would be learned” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p.163). Rassaei (2015) defines TE as “the process of making some aspects of a text more salient to learners by means of manipulating some characteristics of the text” (p. 283) and declares that it “helps learners pay more attention to target forms, which is in turn conducive to L2 development” (p.283). In other words, TE can be used to highlight specific written input features to promote noticing from learners and consequently, ease L2 performance. Instances of this strategy would be, among others, underlining, *italicizing*, **bold typing**, **colour changing** or CAPITAL LETTERS.

A large number of existing studies in the broader literature have examined the effectiveness of Textual Enhancement concerning L2 development due to its significance (Loewen & Inceoglu, 2016). Results appear inconsistent because although scarcely studies have shown a negative impact of TE regarding comprehension, few studies have shown no impact, and many have brought about noticeable effects.

2.2 Negative impact of Textual Enhancement:

Aiming at processing for meaning or form has been a centre of attention about those hardly studies which have resulted in negative impact – specifically, about L2 written comprehension. Thus, although most of the research has had favourable or no outcomes, Lee (2007) concluded that TE is a useful focus on form approach, but it might have an adverse influence on comprehension.

In 2007, he carried out a study which aimed at investigating the effects of both topic familiarity and IE when EFL learners (17 years-old) were engaged in a reading comprehension task. What was relevant about his research was that participants were required to pay attention to form – passive structures – and meaning all at once.

The results of the study evidenced that TE reinforced the students' L2 form performance, but it did not have the same effects on comprehension. Those students who developed the textually enhanced task got lower comprehension grades than those who accomplished the non-enhanced text. Lee (2007) stated that his research proved to characterize TE as a positive strategy to promote focus on form, but it could not be considered an approach to ease meaning process at the same time.

Furthermore, his results suggested a “pedagogical drawback in content-based curricula” (Lee, 2007, p.110) because L2 learners might not be able to efficiently process for content and language concurrently – at least when TE is the focus on form approach. Nevertheless, later studies (Labrozzi, 2016) did not reveal such a negative impact on comprehension which implies further research.

2.3 No impact of Textual Enhancement:

Attempting to investigate TE effects on SLA, there are some studies which have found no remarkable implications. Thus, researchers have found no difference between textually enhanced and non-enhanced tasks as regards participants L2 performance or noticing.

In their study about L2 Spanish noticing and knowledge, Loewen & Inceoglu (2016) concluded that there was no difference between participants (18-25 years old) who had been exposed to textually enhanced passages to those with non-enhanced readings. Moreover, they realised that learners in the TE group did not pay more attention to the targeted forms, which might claim that the strategy does not always accomplish its purpose (Loewen & Inceoglu, 2016).

A more recent research paper conducted by Rassaei (2020) examined the effects of TE alone as well as in combination with another focus on form strategy: recasts. On the one hand, it was determined that TE had no significant implications, which led to the notion that it was a too implicit focus on form technique. However, on the other hand, when combined with recasts, their effectiveness increased. It could be assumed that TE might be complementary to other focus on form approaches but not the main source.

The enhancement technique used, or the communicative value of the highlighted features have also been considered as possible variables that contribute to this lack of effectiveness (Wong, 2003). It was the conclusion that Wong (2003) reached after recognizing that TE did not help L1 French-speakers achieve a higher L2 English error correction ability. Besides, the targeted items were not lexical words but rather, functional elements.

2.4 Positive impact of Textual Enhancement:

Most studies have relied on the value of TE and stimulated further research on the domain. It has been stated that TE has a positive influence on receptive but not productive knowledge (Cho, 2010), is more useful than other techniques such as input flood (Rassaei, 2015) and aids improving other procedures effectiveness (Rassaei, 2020).

A major topic of concern has also been the TE format, which was the overriding ambition Simard (2009) wanted to achieve in her study. After investigating the saliency of English plural markers through seven different typographical techniques and a control group, she concluded that both “capital letters and a combination of three cues ... appear to have promoted best scores on tests” (Simard, 2009, p.131) These results provide further proposals if implementing TE in classroom contexts because how the text is physically manipulated is as important as the strategy itself.

Sánchez Gutiérrez, Serrano and García (2019) have recently investigated the efficacy of TE, along with frequency, concerning vocabulary spelling and meaning. Even though their findings suggested that TE does not necessarily imply meaning processing, it resulted to have a positive impact on immediate spelling recognition. Correspondingly, TE could be extensively explored as a possible focus on form technique to ease early EFL learners' writing skills since it could help students pay attention to the spelling of lexical items.

Some other late research has also focused on the effectiveness of TE with regards to specific linguistic elements. For instance, Boers, Demecheleer, He, Deconinck, Stengers and Eyckmans (2017) concentrated on formulaic language. They proved that although TE promotes the noticing of the highlighted words it does not lead to the acquisition of the complete formulaic structure. Choi (2017) tackled collocations and likewise, results showed that participants exposed to the enhanced texts spent more time paying attention to the highlighted words and could remember more items afterwards. Interestingly, it was observed that those in the non-enhanced text group were able to remember more non-enhanced information than learners who had experimented the TE strategy. As Choi (2017) states, TE implied that learners “expended relatively more cognitive resources for processing and encoding the targeted collocations, thus having relatively fewer cognitive resources for processing other text content” (p.418). In other words, students devoted so much effort focusing on the modified input that they did not process the rest of the information presented. Hence, it can be reasonably presumed that TE needs to be assessed concerning task complexity as well.

3. METHOD:

The present paper emerges from an observed problem and inquires the effectiveness of a possible solution through descriptive research. Regarding the methodology used, it follows a quantitative approach because the information is quantified with a further simple statistical analysis.

3.1 Research question and aims:

Considering the afore-stated inconsistency in respect of TE research, the present study emerges from and is based on, those papers which proved positive impacts. Observing that 5th graders from the public-school Sant Salvador d'Horta struggled when applying the accurate form of written simple present and continuous patterns made me wonder if implementing TE could help them improve. Consequently, this study addresses the following research question:

“In 5th primary level EFL classrooms, how does a textually enhanced reading comprehension affect learners' written output?”

Therefore, the general aim of the study states as follows:

- To analyse how a textually enhanced reading comprehension affects 5th grade EFL learners' written output.

Besides, the specific objectives are hereby proposed:

- To compare the learners' written performance between a non-textually enhanced and enhanced reading comprehension.
- To examine the implications of TE concerning high, middle, and low EFL competence students.

3.2 Participants:

This paper is contextualized at the Catalan public-school Sant Salvador d'Horta (Santa Coloma de Farners, La Selva). A total of 51 learners (28 boys and 23 girls) aged between 9 and 11 years old participated in the study. They were 5th graders and received three hours of English instruction per week within the school context. Most of the pupils (78.5%) were either Catalan or Spanish native speakers since 17 (33.4%) learners spoke Catalan at home, 15 (29.4%) Spanish and 8 (15.7%) used

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

both languages. Concerning the other 11 pupils (21.5%), although being schooled in Catalan, they had additional home languages such as English (5.9%), Panjabi (5.9%), Arabic (5.9%), Berber (1.9%) and Romanian (1.9%).

Students were divided into three groups according to their EFL competence. It was based on their score in a multiple-choice test and the assessment achieved in the English subject in the two previous courses. There were 18 learners in the higher group, 16 in the middle group and 17 in the lower group.

3.3 Materials of data collection:

Personal questionnaire

An initial short personal questionnaire (see annex 1) was prepared to get descriptive information and characteristics of the participants. Data was not directly related to the results of the study but to the type of learners who participated in it. The questionnaire was written in the language pupils were schooled in, Catalan, to ease understanding.

Multiple-choice test and EFL reports

To divide students into the three groups according to their EFL competence, two materials were used. First, I designed a multiple-choice test (see annex 2), which was composed of 10 sentences and combined present simple and continuous verb patterns. To ensure that lack of comprehension did not influence students' performance, the content was related to "sports and activities", a topic they had already been assessed during the first part of the term.

Second, attempting to carefully establish the three groups, the evaluation EFL reports from the two previous courses (2018-2019 and 2019-2020) were also consulted together with the English teacher.

Reading comprehension passages

Two reading comprehension texts were prepared to collect the main data of the study. The first task was a non-enhanced text (see annex 3) and the second a highly enhanced text (see annex 4). Both readings were equally structured and included

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

similar content related to “sports and activities”. However, they were designed differently to avoid that the second reading fulfilment was influenced by repetition.

Moreover, 6 comprehension questions proceeded each reading and all of them could be directly inferred from the text. Likewise, questions included TE or not depending on the narrative. Concerning the items enhanced in the second text, it was considerably modified to promote enough instances. Both lexical and functional items were highlighted and followed the same typographical change in the reading and questions.

3.4 Procedure:

The main development of the present study took place between November 23rd and December 11th in the 5th graders' classrooms. Under the supervision of the English teacher or tutor, I was responsible to explain participants the different tasks as well as the objectives of the study. It must be stated that the learners' L1 was used to clarify understanding. Moreover, apart from the personal questionnaire which could be completed in Catalan, students were required to use English throughout the other stages.

The data collection started with the fulfilment of the personal questionnaire and it was followed by the multiple-choice test. Both assignments were initially explained so each student was able to start the second once the first was completed. Participants devoted 30 minutes to develop both tasks during the first English lesson of the week. Therefore, 5th B and C accomplished this first phase on November 23rd morning and 5th A on November 24th.

The second stage focused on the development of the non-textually enhanced and textually enhanced reading comprehensions. It was divided into two sessions which followed the same procedure: participants completed the non-enhanced task on the first lesson and the enhanced reading on the second. There was, approximately, a one-week period between the two sessions. Thus, while the non-textually enhanced texts were accomplished on November 23rd (5th B), 24th (5th C) and 25th (5th A) afternoon, the textually enhanced passages proceeded on November 30th (5th B and C) and December 1st (5th A) morning.

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

WEEK 1					
	Monday 23 rd	Tuesday 24 th	Wednesday 25 th	Thursday 26 th	Friday 27 th
MORNING	5 th B Questionnaire and multiple-choice. 5 th C Questionnaire and multiple-choice.	5 th A Questionnaire and multiple-choice.			
AFTERNOON	5 th B Non-enhanced reading comprehension.	5 th C Non-enhanced reading comprehension.	5 th A Non-enhanced reading comprehension.		

Figure 1. Schedule of the procedure regarding the personal questionnaire, multiple-choice and non-enhanced passage fulfilment.

WEEK 2					
	Monday 30 th	Tuesday 1 st	Wednesday 2 nd	Thursday 3 rd	Friday 4 th
MORNING	5 th B Enhanced reading comprehension. 5 th C Enhanced reading comprehension.	5 th A Enhanced reading comprehension.			

Figure 2. Schedule of the procedure regarding the enhanced passage fulfilment.

As stated, two reading comprehension texts were prepared to collect the main data of the study. The first task was a non-enhanced text (see annex 3) and the second a highly enhanced text (see annex 4). Both readings were equally structured and included similar content related to “sports and activities”. However, they were designed differently to avoid that the second reading fulfilment was influenced by repetition.

6 comprehension questions proceeded each reading and all of them could be directly inferred from the text. Likewise, questions included TE or not depending on the narrative. Concerning the items enhanced in the second text, it was considerably modified to promote enough instances. Both lexical and functional items were highlighted and followed the same typographical change in the reading and questions. The text included several typographical techniques, which were randomly chosen.

About the procedure, first, the readings and the comprehension questions which followed were presented to students. Then, they were told to complete the English activity individually. No further issues were explained but learners were emphasised to use complete sentences in their written answers. They devoted about 30 minutes per session and all the passages were eventually handed in and saved for later analysis.

The last stage of the study aimed at the appropriate and accurate establishment of the three groups in relation to the students' EFL competence before data analysis. As the multiple-choice tests were assessed and participants were provisionally grouped, between December 9th and 11th the detailed classification proceeded. The English teacher and I consulted the EFL reports from the two previous courses and determined the participants' accurate EFL level. The information was contrasted with the results obtained in the multiple-choice tests and the final three coherent groups were established.

3.5 Data analysis:

To analyse the collected data, different strategies were implemented depending on the purpose and type of material used. The predominant analysis was quantitative because the data was measured, counted, and statistically represented with no further personal interpretation. The programme used was *Excel*.

The multiple-choice test was assessed and scored out of 10. Each correct answer was worth 1 point and incorrect answers did not discount. Scorings under 5 referred to the lower EFL competence group, between 5 and 8 to the middle group, and 8 onwards to the higher group. Regarding the EFL reports, a combination of the two assessments (school year 2018-2019 and 2019-2020) was considered, and the

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

higher grade was chosen for those participants whose grading was different in both courses. As they followed the Catalan assessment criteria, students who achieved an *Assoliment Excel·lent* (9-10) were labelled in the higher group, pupils who got *Assoliment Notable* (7-8) were placed in the middle group, and learners with an *Assoliment satisfactori* (5-6) or *No Assoliment* (below 5) in the lower group.

The two reading comprehension passages were equally assessed following a previously established criterion. It was based on the syntactical and grammatical aspects (see annex 5) as well as comprehension. Each question was worth 1 point and thus, the whole reading was graded out of 6. Afterwards, the score out of 10 was calculated. Each participants' tasks were paired and results between the non-enhanced and enhanced readings were compared in terms of improvement and the other variables of the study presented in the results section.

4. RESULTS:

The results of the present study attempt to analyse the effectiveness of textual enhancement in three 5th graders classrooms and need to be studied regarding this specific educational context. The results emerge from the participants' written output in both the non-enhanced and the enhanced reading comprehensions. They are based on quantitative measurement of the scores obtained in both tasks and are related to improvement, average grading, and comprehension.

4.1 Improvement between non-enhanced and enhanced reading comprehensions:

A first feature considered has been the degree of improvement. The participants' performance grading has been established into three categories, which depend on whether learners got higher, the same or lower scores in the reading with TE instances in contrast with the basic text.

Concerning the complete sample of participants and so, no other factors rather than their written performance, it must be stated that 13 pupils improved, 7 obtained the same score and 31 achieved a lower assessment in the enhanced passage. These results show that TE had a predominantly 61% of negative impact, followed by a 25% positive impact and 14% of no impact at all.

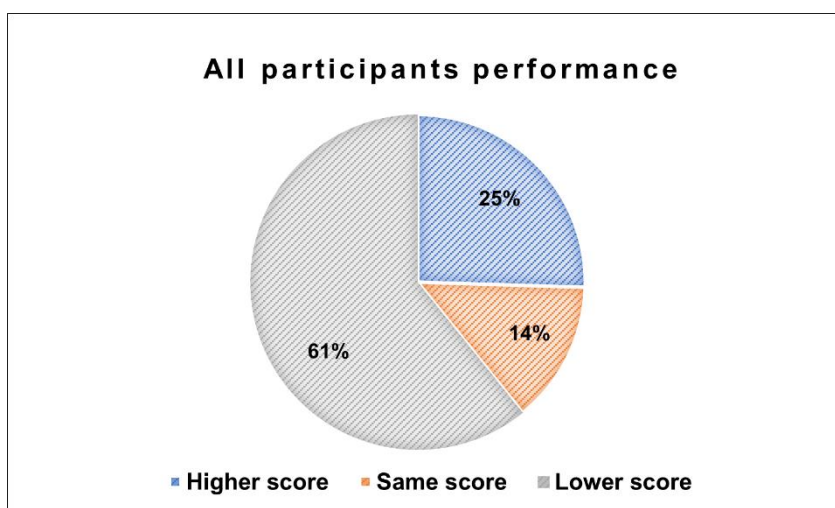


Figure 3. Representation of participants who improved, got the same or lower scores in the enhanced text in contrast with the non-enhanced reading.

Such variable has also been studied regarding the participants EFL competence, and results confirm that learners in all groups performed better in the non-enhanced text. In the higher group, 4 participants improved, 5 obtained the same score and 9 got a lower mark. In the middle group, 4 learners got a higher mark, 2 remained the same and 11 achieved a lower score. Eventually, in the lower group 5 improved and 11 did worse, with no pupils who obtained the same assessment.

Therefore, results which show a negative effect of TE refer to 50% in the higher group, 65% in the middle group and 69% in the lower group. The positive impact is related to 22% in the higher group, 23% in the middle group and 31% in the lower group. Eventually, instances of no impact could be related to 28% in the higher group and 12% in the middle group.

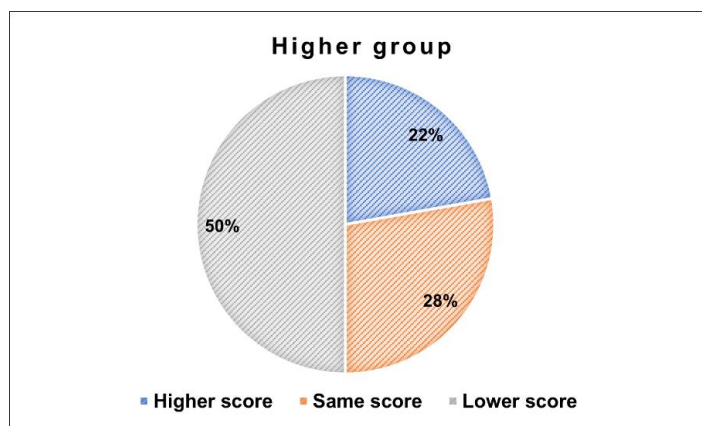


Figure 4. Representation of high EFL competence students who improved, got the same or lower scores in the enhanced text in contrast with the non-enhanced reading.

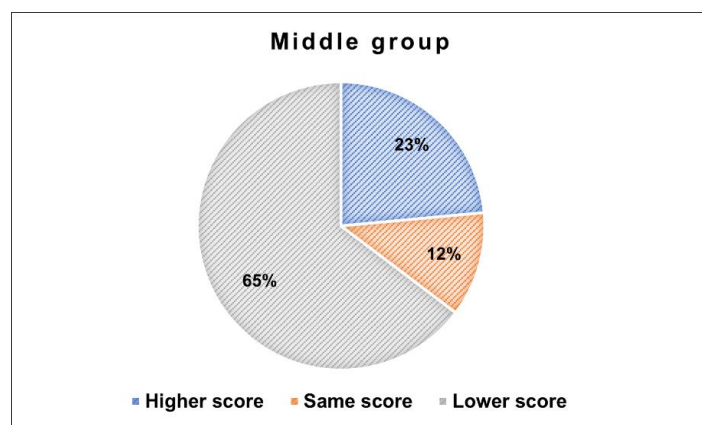


Figure 5. Representation of middle EFL competence students who improved, got the same or lower scores in the enhanced text in contrast with the non-enhanced reading.

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

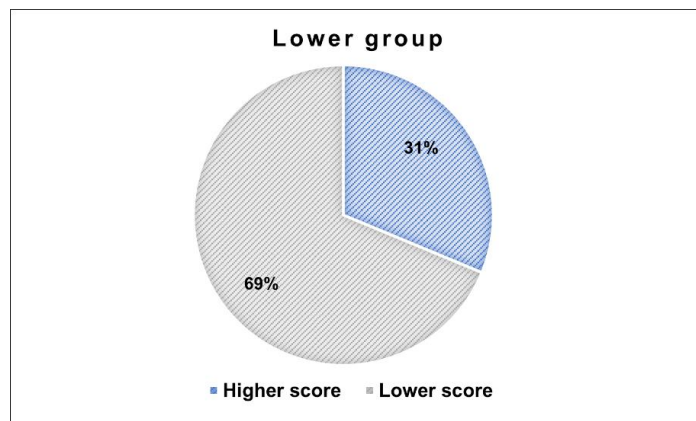


Figure 6. Representation of low EFL competence students who improved, got the same or lower scores in the enhanced text in contrast with the non-enhanced reading.

4.2 Average scores in non-enhanced and enhanced reading passages:

Focusing on the overall average grading in both non-enhanced and enhanced reading texts, it has been observed that participants got higher results in the first than in the latter. While the average mark results in a 6.58 for the basic text, 5.61 results for the task with TE instances. Therefore, there is a 15% deviation between the two measurements, which implies that learners performed slightly better in the non-modified reading passage.

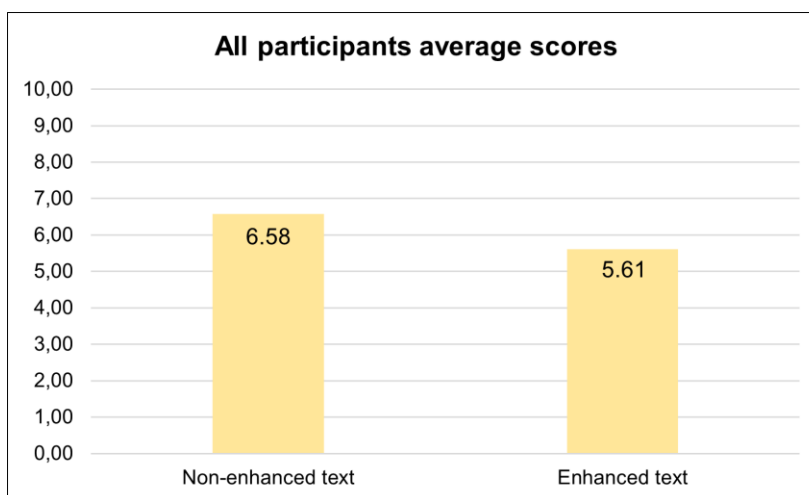


Figure 7. Representation of the average scores obtained by all participants in the non-enhanced and enhanced reading comprehensions.

When considering the average grading concerning EFL competence, coherently, there is also inequality in the learners' performance. Likewise, scores in the non-

enhanced text are higher than in the enhanced text but the difference does not remain the same in all groups.

Participants in the higher EFL competence group have obtained 8.44 in the basic text and 8.03 in the enhanced text, with a 5% deviation. Learners in the middle group have achieved a 6.26 in the basic reading and 4.79 in the enhanced passage, with a 24% deviation. And pupils in the lower group have resulted in 4.83 and 3.77, with a 22% deviation.

These afore-mentioned results show that regardless of the targeted reading comprehension, average scores positively correlate with the EFL competence: the higher EFL competence participants have, the greater the results are. Similarly, the lower the EFL competence is, the lower the results are. However, such direct association cannot be established concerning the difference between the two grades, which implies that TE has not the same negative impact in all EFL competence groups when addressing the average numbered grade. The middle and lower groups have been more negatively affected than the higher group.

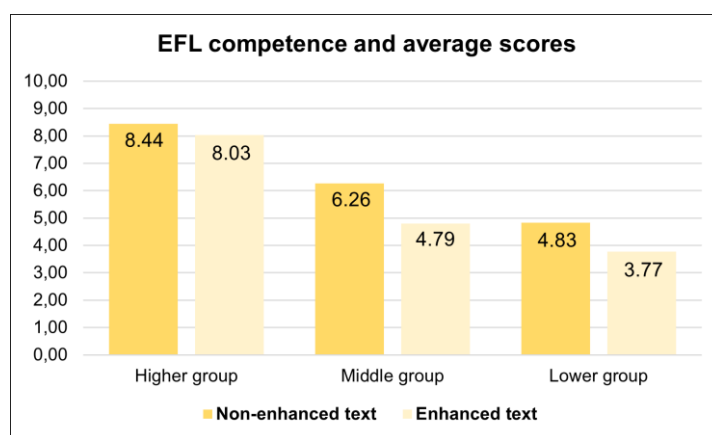


Figure 8. Representation of the average scores obtained by higher, middle, and lower EFL competence groups in the non-enhanced and enhanced reading comprehensions.

4.3 Comprehension in non-enhanced and enhanced reading passages:

A further characteristic tackled has been comprehension in the participants' written productions. To measure comprehension only answered questions have been considered and those unanswered have not been counted either as comprehended or non-comprehended questions.

Regarding all participants' output, detailed results are consistent with the overall TE impact in this study. In both reading passages, learners answered 283 questions (92%) out of the total 306, which implies that 8% remained unanswered. However, the degree of comprehension is different because in the modified sample, 242 (86%) written productions showed proper comprehension and in the basic sample, 266 (93%). Therefore, participants' comprehension was greater in the non-enhanced text, with an 8% difference.

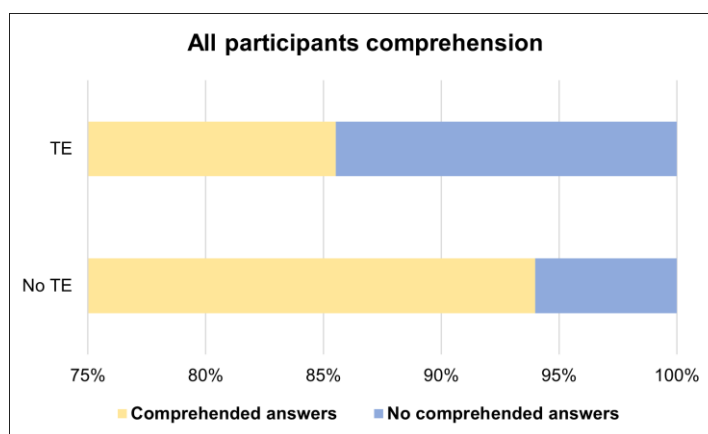


Figure 9. Representation of comprehension in the enhanced and non-enhanced enhanced reading passages by all participants.

Moreover, comprehension has also been studied regarding EFL competence, and the negative impact of TE is consistent in both the middle and lower groups. Regarding the lower group, 91.95% of the non-enhanced answers were properly comprehended, and 71.16% in the basic text. Concerning the middle group, 92.39% productions showed comprehension in the modified text and 85.15% in the non-enhanced reading. Nevertheless, little improvement has been observed in the higher group, which instantiates a weak positive effect of TE in the present study. Out of the complete sample of answered questions in the EFL higher group, 97.12% were properly comprehended in the non-enhanced text, and 97.14% in the enhanced reading.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS:

As afore-stated, the present research was conducted at three 5th graders EFL classrooms from the public-school Sant Salvador d'Horta (Santa Coloma de Farners). Consequently, findings of this study must be considered regarding this specific educational context, as well as the methodology used, and cannot be further generalized.

Results comparing the participants' written performance between both tasks synthesise that learners were greatly better at the first than at the latter. Neither improvement nor average grading nor comprehension have resulted to be higher in the text with TE instances. In fact, participants performed much worse in the enhanced text, which suggests that TE has had a negative effect both in form and meaning processing.

The present study is, therefore, partly in line with Lee (2007) as Textual Enhancement has had an adverse influence on comprehension. The main difference is, however, that it has also occurred in terms of accuracy. TE has contributed to produce more single-word or partially adequate structures, and fewer instances with the proper verb pattern and the needed subject. Moreover, whether the technique has been effective, or not, to influence the participants' receptive knowledge (Cho, 2010) remains unknown because such measurement was not possible in the present research. Nevertheless, as learners aimed at productive knowledge further strategies or instruction, together with TE, might have been required to achieve desired outcomes (Cho, 2010).

TE has also been studied regarding the participants' EFL competence and general results are consistent with the negative impact of the strategy. Nonetheless, there exist remarkable differences which contribute to concluding that linguistic competence is a factor that has influenced the effectiveness of TE.

Findings of the degree of improvement in the enhanced reading passage imply that the lower the EFL competence is, the more significant the TE impact is, either positively or negatively. For instance, the lower EFL group is the sample which got a higher percentage of participants who got worse but also better results. More homogeneous results about the two other groups, as well as examples of learners

who remained the same grading, might suggest that higher EFL competences contribute to lessening the impact of TE.

When considering the distance between the two average gradings, though, a controversial feature arises. Although the lower group has had a greater number of participants who did worse in terms of improvement, the middle group comes to be the sample with a higher difference between the two numerical measurements. Thus, two overriding conclusions can be drawn. On the one hand, TE leads that more low competence students perform worse regardless of the assessment grading. And on the other hand, independently of the number of participants who perform worse, TE leads that middle EFL competence pupils to achieve lower marks.

The EFL competence has also determined the degree to which comprehension has been negatively affected by TE; as the EFL competence lowers, so does understanding. Scarcely improvement in the higher group suggests no effects regarding the technique, which implies that higher EFL competence pupils can process for meaning without being distracted by typographical changes (Labrozzi, 2016). A further conclusion is, therefore, that being able to process for meaning and form simultaneously in an enhanced reading passage is not as effective as in an undecorated written text if the EFL competence is low.

To conclude, considering that the present research was based on those studies which proved positive impacts regarding TE, the overall results of this paper indicate the opposite. Unexpectedly, and at first quite surprising, the textual enhancement technique used has affected learners' written output negatively rather than positively, both in terms of accuracy and comprehension. Therefore, it can be stated that the approach applied to analyse TE, has not been useful to help 5th graders improve, when processing for meaning and form, in a reading comprehension with simple and continuous patterns.

Some studies (Labrozzi, 2016; Simard, 2009; Wong, 2003) addressing the effectiveness of TE have tackled the strategy format. Results indicate that the manner a text is physically manipulated is as crucial as the strategy itself. Thus, a personal interpretation of such startling outcomes in the present study is that the

enhancement technique used has not been appropriate. I sincerely believe the design of the enhanced reading comprehension I proposed included too many TE instances and was extremely modified. Hence, learners' cognitive resources focused on such large input typographical variety, that they could not properly process either the meaning or form presented because "there is a limit to the amount of focused mental activity we can engage in at one time" (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p.109)

Differences about the EFL competence support the afore-mentioned interpretation since it could be assumed that lower EFL competence participants have been more distracted by the strategy used due to cognitive resources. As learners become more L2 proficient, they process information quicker which "frees up cognitive processing resources to notice other aspects of the language" (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p.109). Therefore, they could have used other strategies than the ones explicitly presented which have helped them not being so distracted and not that negatively influenced by TE. On the contrary, lower EFL competence participants have achieved the opposite effect.

Concerning the limitations of this research, they naturally include the design of the enhanced reading comprehension. A less modified text should have been proposed with fewer enhancement formats and centred on form content. For instance, it would have been better to highlight verbal structures, such as "Claudia **IS DOING** archery now" or verbal inflections, such as "She go**ES** diving on Sundays". Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the present comparison between the two reading passages is enough to analyse the effectiveness of TE, especially in terms of L2 performance. Probably, applying the strategy for a longer period would have resulted greater.

Another source of limitation is due to the data analysis since a complementary qualitative approach could have provided more specific features about the participants' performance. Real examples and interpretations about their written performance could have helped instantiate the presented results much better. Moreover, more time should have been devoted to task completion because the reason why some questions were unanswered remains unknown. It might be due to L2 understanding or time factors, among others.

With reference to pedagogical implications, the findings of this research might suggest that simplicity is preferred to complexity regarding input physical characteristics in EFL contexts. Learning materials must include elements to raise students' awareness but overestimating them might interfere on the learning process. More precisely, this study indicates that overuse of TE can imply negative outcomes in the learners' performance, at least in a 5th grader reading comprehension activity. It conveys that EFL teachers need to carefully apply the learning strategies. Besides, the students' linguistic competence is an essential factor to consider since not all teaching and learning procedures might be equally beneficial.

Future research should consider the potential effects of Textual Enhancement in EFL primary 5th-grade contexts more carefully. For instance, proposing a more prudent textually enhanced reading passage with detailed qualitative insight. In addition to the EFL competence, TE could also be studied regarding other learners' characteristics such as motivation or age. A contributing factor would be primary EFL teachers' beliefs regarding its effectiveness since it would help to appreciate whether it is a prompting pedagogic strategy to apply in public Catalan schools.

6. REFERENCES:

- Boers, F., Demecheleer, M., He, L., Deconinck, J., Stengers, H., & Eyckmans, J. (2017). Typographic enhancement of multiword units in second language text. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics: 27(2)*, 448 – 469. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12141>
- Cho, M. Y. (2010). The effects of input enhancement and written recall on noticing and acquisition. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching: 4(1)*, 71-87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501220903388900>
- Choi, S. (2017). Processing and learning of enhanced English collocations: An eye movement study. *Language Teaching Research: 21(3)*, 403 – 426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168816653271>
- Labrozzi, R. M. (2016). The effects of textual enhancement type on L2 form recognition and reading comprehension in Spanish. *Language Teaching Research: 20(1)*, 75 – 91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168814561903>
- Lee, S. K. (2007). Effects of textual enhancement and topic familiarity on Korean EFL students' reading comprehension and learning of passive form. *Language Learning: 51(1)*, 87 – 118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2007.00400.x>
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How Languages Are Learned (4th ed.)*. Oxford University Press.
- Loewen, S., & Inceoglu, S. (2016). The effectiveness of visual input enhancement on the noticing and L2 development of the Spanish past tense. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching: 6(1)*, 89-110. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2016.6.1.5>
- Rassaei, E. (2015). Effects of textual enhancement and input enrichment on L2 development. *TESOL Journal: 6(2)*, 281 – 301. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.149>
- Rassaei, E. (2020). The separate and combined effects of recasts and textual enhancement as two focus on form techniques on L2 development. *System: 89*, 1 – 14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.102193>

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

- Sánchez Gutiérrez, C. H., Serrano, M.P., & García, P.R. (2019). The effects of word frequency and typographical enhancement on incidental vocabulary learning in reading. *Journal of Spanish Language Teaching: 6(1)*, 14 – 31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23247797.2019.1590000>
- Schmidt, R. W. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics: 11(2)*, 129 – 158. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/11.2.129>
- Simard, D. (2009). Differential effects of textual enhancement formats on intake. *System: 37*, 124 – 135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2008.06.005>
- Smith, M. S. (1993). Input enhancement in instructed SLA. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition: 15*, 165 – 179. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100011943>
- Spada, N. (2011). Beyond form-focused instruction: Reflections on past, present and future research. *Language Teaching: 44(2)*, 225 – 236. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000224>
- Wong, W. (2003). Textual enhancement and simplified input effects on L2 comprehension and acquisition of non-meaningful grammatical form. *Applied Language Learning: 13(2)*, 17-45.

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

Rut Parella Dilmé

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Personal questionnaire.

INFORMACIÓ DELS PARTICIPANTS

Soc un NEN o una NENA .

Quants anys tens? _____

Quina o quines llengües parles a casa? _____

Quantes hores d'anglès fas a l'escola? _____

Fas anglès fora de l'escola? SÍ NO

En cas afirmatiu, quantes hores dediques a l'anglès fora de l'escola? _____

GRÀCIES PER PARTICIPAR!

ANNEX 2: Multiple-choice test.

NAME: _____

GROUP: _____

Read the following sentences and choose the best answer:

1) I table tennis on Mondays.

a	plays	b	play	c	am playing
---	-------	---	------	---	------------

2) Sarah and Jack swimming at the moment.

a	are going	b	is going	c	goes
---	-----------	---	----------	---	------

3) She gymnastics now.

a	does	b	is doing	c	do
---	------	---	----------	---	----

4) Mark hockey once a week.

a	play	b	is playing	c	plays
---	------	---	------------	---	-------

5) He diving twice a week.

a	is going	b	goes	c	are going
---	----------	---	------	---	-----------

6) I archery at the moment.

a	do	b	does	c	am doing
---	----	---	------	---	----------

7) They climbing on Wednesdays and Fridays.

a	go	b	goes	c	am going
---	----	---	------	---	----------

8) Martha abseiling every day.

a	goes	b	is going	c	am going
---	------	---	----------	---	----------

9) He badminton at the moment.

a	plays	b	is playing	c	am playing
---	-------	---	------------	---	------------

10) I trampolining now.

a	go	b	is going	c	am going
---	----	---	----------	---	----------

ANNEX 3: Non-enhanced reading comprehension.

Name: Date:



Dear Diary,
Today I'm writing about my school friends!

On Mondays, Lisa plays badminton. She plays badminton twice a week. At the moment she is reading a book at school. My friends Mark and Sarah are abseiling now. They go abseiling on Fridays. They go abseiling once a week. Jenny is playing badminton now. She plays badminton on Wednesdays and loves winning matches! My brother Tom is also my friend. He plays tennis on Saturdays. Now he is running.

Goodbye diary! I'm going swimming today.

Love,
Oliver.



NOW, ANSWER THE QUESTIONS:

EXAMPLE: **When does Lisa play badminton?**
She plays badminton on Mondays.

What is Lisa doing at the moment?

.....
.....

What are Mark and Sarah doing now?

.....
.....

When do Mark and Sarah go abseiling?

.....
.....

What does Jenny do on Wednesdays?

.....
.....

When does Tom play tennis?

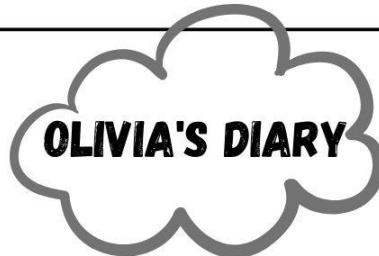
.....
.....

What is Tom doing now?

.....
.....

ANNEX 4: Enhanced reading comprehension.

Name: Date:



Dear Diary,

Today I'm writing about **my school friends!**

On Fridays, **Nicholas** goes abseiling. **He** goes abseiling once a week. **Now**, he is playing tennis with Cynthia at the tennis club. My Friends **Noah and Ralph** are swimming now. **They** go swimming **ON TUESDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS**. **They** go swimming twice a week. **Claudia** is doing archery now. **She** does archery ON THURSDAYS and loves winning! My sister **Janine** is also my friend. **She** goes diving ON SUNDAYS. **NOW**, **She** is reading a book.

Goodbye diary!

I'm playing badminton TODAY!

Love,

OLIVIA.



NOW, ANSWER THE QUESTIONS:

EXAMPLE: When does **Nicholas** go abseiling?

He goes abseiling **on Fridays**.

What **IS Nicholas** doing **now**?

.....
.....

The overwhelming effects of textual enhancement in 5th graders' written performance.

What **ARE** **Noah and Ralph** **doING** now?

.....
.....

WHEN do **Noah and Ralph** **GO** swimm**ING**?

.....
.....

What do**ES** **Claudia** do **ON THURSDAYS**?

.....
.....

WHEN do**ES** **Janine** go **diving**?

.....
.....

What **IS** **Janine** **doING** **NOW**?

.....
.....

ANNEX 5: Assessment criteria reading comprehensions.

To grade both reading comprehensions, the following criteria are established. The task is assessed out of 6 so each answer is worth, maximum 1 point.

Mark per sentence	Criteria
1	Comprehension is adequate. The sentence includes the complete appropriate (present simple or continuous) verb pattern, and no elements are missing.
	Example: Mark and Sarah <u>are abseiling</u> .
0.75	Comprehension is adequate. The sentence includes the appropriate verb pattern but there is a little element missing.
	Example: Mark and Sarah <u>abseiling</u> . Janine <u>go</u> diving on Saturdays.
0.5	Comprehension is adequate. The sentence includes the appropriate verb pattern but there is no word order or considerable elements are missing.
	Example: <u>Is go</u> abseiling on Fridays.
0.25	Comprehension is adequate. The sentence includes the appropriate verb but not in the correct pattern (present simple instead of continuous or continuous instead of present simple). There is no word order and considerable elements are missing.
	Example: The Tom <u>is plays</u> now running. Now Lisa <u>read</u> a book.
0	Comprehension is not adequate. The answer includes an individual word or there is no answer or a verb. Example: A book.