

Exploring the Efficacy of Instruction and Its Interaction with Linguistic Complexity: Explicit or Implicit Form-Focused Instruction?

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Abstract

A classroom-based study was designed to compare the effectiveness of explicit FFI and implicit form focused instruction (FFI) for learning two English verbs forms and to investigate whether their effectiveness varies according to linguistic complexity. Specifically, two intact intermediate English grammar classes of thirty-two female nursing students were assigned to explicit FFI and implicit FFI and were taught two English verb tenses: simple past (SP) and present perfect (PP). Participants' performance was then measured on a discrete-point task (DPT) and a writing task (WT) at three periods of time: before the instruction (pretest), after the instruction (posttest1), and six weeks following the instruction (posttest2). Major findings were (i) each of the explicit FFI and implicit FFI instruction was effective for their group over time, (ii) no statistically significant differences between the two groups were found in the effect of instruction on the DPT and the WT, (iii) no significant differences were found between the explicit FFI group and the implicit FFI group on the SP in the DPT and the WT, (ix) the explicit FFI group significantly outperformed the implicit FFI group on the PP in the DPT, and (v) the performance of the two groups diminished significantly on the PP in the writing task.

Keywords: explicit/implicit instruction, form-focused instruction, second language learning, grammar instruction, linguistic complexity, efficacy of grammar instruction