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FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION IN L2 FRENCH

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AND LINGUISTICS

ABSTRACT

While substantial evidence lends support to an explicit focus on form in language programme design, there is a need for systematic investigation of the relative effectiveness of subtypes of explicit L2 instruction (Norris & Ortega, 2000). This study considers planned approaches to form-focused instruction, that is, focus-on-forms (Long, 1991). It contrasts grammar instruction that is deductive (i.e., involving rule presentation and metalinguistic information) with instruction that is inductive (i.e., instruction that focuses student attention on form but includes no rule presentation).

Language instruction traditionally focuses on giving students opportunities to produce the particular language forms that have been the focus of instruction. Recent research claims that instruction that gives students the opportunity to process language input is more effective (e.g.,VanPatten, 1996, 2002a). This study compares the relative effectiveness of structured input and output-based instruction.

Most research investigates the effectiveness of instruction in terms of overall group gains. A particular instructional method may not, however, benefit all learners uniformly. This study establishes whether there is any relationship between the effectiveness of the instructional methods investigated and learner aptitude.

The study was conducted in a New Zealand high school and the structure targeted was direct object pronouns in L2 French. Students ($N = 92$) were assigned to four groups: (a) structured input instruction; (b) output-based/deductive instruction; (c) inductive instruction (input/output-based); (d) control. They were assessed on listening

comprehension, reading comprehension, written production and oral production tasks. All but one of these language measures required a pressured response. Students were also assessed on measures of language aptitude: (a) language analytic ability, (b) phonemic coding ability and (c) working memory.

Results reveal significantly greater gains for the Deductive instruction group than for the Inductive instruction group. The students who received output-based instruction also performed better overall than the students who received structured input instruction. There is some evidence to suggest that deductive instruction that gives students the opportunity to produce language output may level out individual differences in language aptitude.

With respect to the testing procedures used, the study highlights the difficulty of designing language measures that access implicit language knowledge.

To my father

who has always loved and supported me
and championed all my academic
endeavours.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

SLA	Second Language Acquisition
L1	First language
L2	Second language