The Effects of Implicit and Explicit Instruction on Simple and Complex Grammatical Structures for Adult English Language Learners

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Abstract

This empirical study of the effects of grammar instruction was conducted at a college-prep, private school on 70 participants in grades seven through twelve. The dependent variable was the number of correct items over the forms from a pre-test, post-test, and delayed-post-test. Chi-square was used to find if there was a significant difference between the two treatments at the .05 level of confidence. The results supported the premise that teaching does make a significant difference in learning, that explicit instruction is significantly better than implicit for the complex rule, that both methods are equally effective for the simple rule, and that structures do not have to match proficiency levels or be sequenced by complexity for significant learning to take place.

Introduction

There are many theories on how a second language (L2) is learned, how to implement various approaches in the classroom, and how to measure learning. Because of the ever-expanding, detail-driven theories put forward, researchers have a difficult time testing those theories in a classroom before they are accepted and implemented by the teachers. This breaking of preceding studies into smaller and smaller detail has led to not only refinements in theoretical understanding and careful classroom implementation on the one hand, but also multiple, confusing studies and contradictory pedagogy on the other--leaving teachers and administrators wondering if valid research on which to build a strong curriculum can be found (Borg, 1999; Ellis, 2001; Lightbown, 2000).

The impact of pedagogy on language learners (LLs) has a variety of theories backed by research with differing findings (N. Ellis, 1994; R. Ellis, 1987; Krashen, 1981, 1982; Schwartz, 1993). This study tested some of those theories in actual L2 classrooms. Its findings are closely attuned to the much-debated grammar instruction category--often called form-focused instruction (FFI) with its divided camps of focus on form (sometimes called implicit instruction and using more

inductive reasoning) and focus on formS (sometimes referred to as explicit and using more deductive reasoning) instruction (Ellis, 2001; Long, 1988, 1991). It attempted to add to the body of research seeking to find if one or the other is better for simple grammatical structures or for complex grammatical structures. It further sought to discover if the proficiency level of LLs has any effect on the outcome of the two instructional treatments over the two structures. It ultimately hopes that this theory-driven research--pedagogically applied and empirically conducted--will eventually better equip curriculum planners and classroom teachers to tailor their lessons with research-based confidence not theory-driven whims. The research questions and results of this study are grouped around three theme questions: Does grammar teaching make a difference? Do methods matter? Do methods have to match proficiency levels?

Second language teaching and learning (SLTL) research has been intensely interested in matching the LL's needs to the best teaching methods. This evolution in the field has led to better understanding and implementation of methodology in the language classroom, and researchers are currently giving focus to the benefit of instruction on the interlanguage (IL). The role of grammar and direct instruction in the process of learning a second language, once discarded, is now being revisited. The motivation to conduct this study has come from attempts to apply second language acquisition (SLA) theory to pedagogy for secondary LLs over 15 years. When certain theories were implemented in actual lessons, the finding was that some of the practices seemed to improve scores on grammar tests and written work while others did not.

Understanding and implementing researched methodologies from the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has become increasing more complex for the practitioner--especially when it comes to research based on implicit and explicit instruction and what grammatical structures might be best suited to each as well as when to introduce those structures (Ellis, 2002; Hinkel & Fotos, 1995; Richards, 2002). Because there is a gap between theory and pedagogy--especially when it comes to the role of grammar, this study attempted to fill some of the void with quality teaching and quality research in an actual L2 classroom. It generally sought to find if grammar instruction translated into grammar learning. It specifically tested if one method of grammar instruction was better suited to certain structures at various proficiency levels than another method. It ultimately hoped to shed a little more light on the role of grammar instruction in a writing class for college-bound secondary LLs. This article briefly presents the first portion of that research.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to provide empirical data on the effect of implicit and explicit instruction of simple and complex grammatical structures on the learning of those structures by LLs at three levels of proficiency. The research sought to lay a foundation for future studies to find "what works" as far as grammar instruction in a secondary-level, college-prep setting. It addressed well-known and widely-held beliefs that a L2 is acquired and not learned, that one method is probably better for certain structures than others, and that structures must be sequenced and coordinated with proficiency levels for learning to take place. It began with a brief discussion of adult language learners and touched on the issue of whether a L2

language is really only acquired or can the learning of a L2 be enhanced through instruction. It sought to contribute to the wealth of research on form-focused instruction (FFI) by eliminating and/or addressing some of the weaknesses in previous studies. Those studies had design flaws, a large number of unrelated variables, and weaknesses in reporting results which make replication difficult if not impossible (Ellis, 2001; Ortega, 2003).

For a complete understanding of the theoretical framework and underlying terminology used for the treatments (explicit and implicit instruction) used in this study, a thorough review of Ellis' (2001) three types of FFI as discussed in Andrews (2007) is necessary. Briefly described, for explicit instruction, learning the form is the primary focus of all the communicative tasks (as opposed to communicative tasks just to understand the meaning without focusing on the grammatical structure). In explicit instruction, a proactively selected form is intensely taught--either by the presentation of the rules and then the giving of examples (deductive reasoning) or by giving examples and then eliciting the rules (inductive reasoning) from the students. Students usually practice the form in communicative output tasks.

For the implicit instructional treatment used in this study, the primary focus of the communicative task is on understanding the meaning of the text (not on rule or structure formation). In implicit instruction, many sentence-examples (from authentic text) containing the structure are presented as input tasks. The input is done not so much by the teacher but by the task. The meaning of the text or task is primary over the grammatical form. The learners may infer "rules" from the examples with or without awareness that they are doing so. The examples and activities, hopefully, cause the LL to process form while interacting with the input. The activities are designed so that the LL must employ the form to accomplish the tasks in the output. Even though students often need metalinguistic explanations as feedback to confirm their hypotheses when they question if their answers are correct, a difference in the implicit treatment used in this study from Ellis' model is that for the grammar "discovery" part of the lesson, no rule formation discussion or activity was overtly encouraged or done. It was hoped that the input task alone would 'push' the LLs to notice the forms.

With these two instructional approaches in mind, this study tested by classroom research a SLA theory that certain structures are learned better by explicit instruction while others are learned better by implicit instruction. It further tested the theory that a structure must match the learners' current proficiency level for intake to occur. It did so by answering the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the learning of complex and simple rules between an explicit, teacher-directed instructional approach and an implicit, grammar-discovery approach?
2. Is there a significant difference in the learning of a complex rule between an explicit, teacher-directed instructional approach and an implicit, grammar-discovery instructional approach? More specifically, is there a significant difference at various proficiency levels: 2a. for beginner language learners? 2b. for intermediate language learners? 2c. for advanced language learners?
3. Is there a significant difference in the learning of a simple rule between an

explicit, teacher-directed instructional approach and an implicit, grammar-discovery instructional approach? More specifically, is there a significant difference at various proficiency levels: 3a. for beginner language learners? 3b. for intermediate language learners? 3c. for advanced language learners?

Methodology

To answer the research questions, a quantitative study was conducted over approximately a 2-month period. There were two treatments covering two grammar structures conducted at three proficiency levels using three testing opportunities over the grammar forms. The number of correct items on the three grammar tests was the dependent variable. The pre-, post- and delayed-post tests used were uniform in number, kinds of items, and in the forms covered. Chi-square was applied to the correct-item counts to test for significance. For both methods, the grammar forms were purposefully chosen; the procedures were carefully followed; and the assessments were uniformly executed.

The participants (N = 70) were intact groups of L2 learners ranging in age from 13 to 19. Most of the students were from Asian countries, and all the participants were enrolled in a private, college-prep, secondary school. There were two treatment groups with N = 35 in each group. The treatment groups were further divided by proficiency levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. The three levels as to proficiency were intact, already-established classes assigned by the school. The three classes, beginner, intermediate, and advanced were further divided into two sections. There was a minimum of n = 11 in each level of each section.

The sections were assigned a corresponding treatment: Treatment One (Explicit) and Two (Implicit). The two different treatments covered two grammar structures: Simple (subject-verb agreement) and Complex (relative clauses). The treatments were administered in approximately 15-minute sessions 4-5 times a week over the period of the study. Each week, all the students in both treatment groups were assessed by the same mini grammar quiz and writing prompt.

The two treatments both used the same steps of noticing, comparing, integrating, error correction and feedback, and assessment. The major difference between the treatments was in the input stage of the teaching/learning process. The explicit treatment was a teacher-directed, formal-teaching of the rules; the implicit treatment was a task-based, grammar-discovery of the same rules. Each treatment was applied at each proficiency level, and the lessons within each treatment were consistently applied at all levels.

Grammar tests over the targeted grammatical structures were administered three times during the study: a Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Delayed-Post-Test format was used. The same number of total test items, kinds of exercises, and grammatical forms were on each of the three tests. The number of correct items from each test for each student in each treatment group and by each form was counted and recorded separately from the three grammar tests. The number of correct items (tallied as frequency counts and verified independently) was the dependent variable. The data was recorded according to treatment groups, grammar structures, and proficiency levels on spreadsheets.

The data was analyzed. Chi-square was used to determine if there were significant increases or decreases in learning between the testing opportunities and to test for significant knowledge/learning gains of the grammar rules by treatments to answer the three major research questions and the six sub-questions. Alpha was rejected at .05. The results were placed within cells in a matrix, and tables were used to present those findings. There were no significant differences on the Pre-Test between the treatment groups as a whole or at any of the three proficiency levels individually at the beginning of the study.

Conclusions from the Findings

The conclusions and findings from this study involving secondary LLs in a college-prep setting are organized around three SLA theories and are presented in the following order:

1. "Does Teaching Make a Difference?" Can a second language be learned? The response addresses the learning of the forms through instruction and includes results from Research Question 1.
2. "Do Methods Matter?" Is one method better for certain structures than others? The response addresses the explicit and implicit treatments in light of learning the complex form and the simple form and includes results from Research Questions 2 and 3.
3. "Do Methods Have to Match Proficiency Levels?" Must structures be sequenced and coordinated with proficiency levels for learning to take place? The response addresses learning of the complex and simple rules by each proficiency level and includes results from Sub Research Questions 2a, 2b, and 2c and Sub Research Questions 3a, 3b, and 3c.

Does Teaching Make a Difference?

This study found that teaching does make a difference. A significant increase in learning the grammar forms was demonstrated by both treatment groups after instructional intervention regardless of method. The findings demonstrate that both treatment groups learned the forms.

However, SLA researchers have taken different positions on whether a L2 is and/or can be learned or must be only acquired. This has led to debate as to whether or not teachers should attempt to intervene in the language-learning process or just flood the LLs with input. Since both the explicit and implicit approaches used in this study were 'teaching' methods, they fall in the 'learning' side as opposed to the 'acquiring' side of that debate. Table 1 presents the results of the tests for significant increases in learning of the grammar rules by all the participants regardless of method.

Table 1. Tests for Significance and Direction of Increase for the Complex and Simple Rules

Pre-Test to Tests	Post Test	Delayed Post Test
Complex Rule	$X^2 = 176.39$ p < .01	$X^2 = 168.92$ p < .01
Simple Rule	$X^2 = 21.43$ p < .01	$X^2 = 6.86$ p < .01

Rules Combined	$X^2 = 165.80$ p < .01	$X^2 = 129.30$ p < .01

The findings show that there was a significant increase in learning the rules between the pre-test and the post-test and between the pre-test and the delayed-post-test during the course of the study. For the complex rule, a significant increase in learning was found for both tests ($X2 = 176.39$ p <.01) and ($X2 = 168.92$ p <.01). For the simple rule, a significant increase in learning was found for both tests ($X2 = 21.43$ p <.01) and ($X2 = 6.86$ p <.01). Both methods attempted to teach the forms, albeit by different approaches, and the findings indicate that both were successful. Therefore, the results of this study do support the SLA research that says intervention in the form of some grammar instruction is beneficial, (Brown,2000; Doughty & Williams, 1998l; Genesee, 2000; Sheen, 2003; Swain, 1995) and do not support the non-interventionist position.

For the Implicitly taught groups, the overall findings for both the Complex and Simple forms did not reject the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996). If adult LLs have sufficient opportunity to interact with the new learning, they have the cognitive ability to unconsciously analyze the material and transfer that learning to new experiences. They can somehow assimilate and correctly form the structures without explicit instruction of the rules. The findings were that the learning of both the complex and simple rules did increase significantly and was maintained by LLs in the implicitly taught groups. Since this group was not formally taught the rules, the findings indicate that they may have somehow learned them by interacting with the structures in the 'grammar-discovery' method.

For the Explicitly taught group, the specific findings for the Complex and Simple forms support the Critical Period Hypothesis position (Brown, 2000) and Ellis' (1996) contention that adult LLs benefit from formal language teaching, which was the method for the Explicit group. According to these studies, adults do use deductive reasoning; they can benefit from structural presentations; they often relate new information to their L1, and they may find deliberative teacher talk and written language forms helpful. Since this group received formal instruction of the rules, the findings indicate that they may have used this method as advanced organizers to subsequently learn the structures.

These findings support brain-based research and studies on adult LLs. The recently-modified Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) now states that adults can and do learn a L2 very well (Ellis, 1997; Johnson & Newport, 1989). Brain-based research further states that adult LLs have the ability to process forms cognitively--either consciously or subconsciously (Brown, 2000; Genesee, 2000; Sousa, 2001; Wolfe, 2001). The findings show that the learning of both the complex and simple rules did increase significantly and that the learning was maintained by both instructional groups. Since the participants in this study were adults, they probably had the capacity for abstract thinking. They should have, therefore, been able to learn from instruction. The findings indicate that they did.

Do Methods Matter?

When the total items correct for each treatment were compared, the explicitly-taught groups' scores were significantly higher than the implicitly-taught groups' scores.

Table 2 presents the total items correct by treatment and the Chi-square test for significance for the tests.

Table 2. Combined Rules Post-Test and Delayed Post-Test Results by Treatment
Total Items Correct (N) and Chi-square Tests for Significance

Post Test -- Combined Rules			Delayed-Post Test -- Combined Rules		
Explicit	**Implicit**	X^2	**Explicit**	**Implicit**	X^2
(N = 2026.0)	(N = 1850.0)	7.90 p < .01	(N = 1940.0)	(N = 1803.5)	4.90 p <.05

The findings show that for the complex and simple rules combined, there were significant differences between the treatments on the Post-Test (X^2 = 7.90 p <.01) and on the Delayed-Post-Test (X^2 = 4.90 p <.05) with the Explicit approach producing the significant difference.

When each rule was compared individually, the study demonstrated that methods do matter for particular rules--as in the case of the Complex rule, but did not find that methods matter for the Simple Rule. Table 3 presents the findings showing significantly higher overall scores for the Explicitly-taught group over the Implicitly-taught group for the Complex Rule on the tests.

Table 3. Complex Rule Post Test and Delayed-Post Test Results by Treatment
Total Items Correct (N) Chi-square Tests for Significance

Post Test - Complex Rule			Delayed-Post Test - Complex Rule		
Explicit	**Implicit**	X^2	**Explicit**	**Implicit**	X^2
(N = 1166.0)	(N = 1028.0)	8.55 p < .01	(N = 1151.0)	(N = 1025.5)	7.12 p < .01

The findings show that for the Complex rule there was a significant difference between the treatments on the Post-Test (X^2 = 8.55 p <.01) and on the Delayed-Post Test (X^2 = 7.12 p <.01) with the Explicit approach producing the significant difference.

The explicit groups' more-formal, cognitive approach may have resonated with the adult learners' brains and perhaps, their instructional expectations more so than the implicit groups' attempts to "discover" the rules and assimilate the forms through meaningful tasks and purposeful practice. Furthermore, students may benefit more from explicit explanation of complex forms because the rules may be just to difficult to induct, and explicit instruction may accelerate the process. For the complex rule, the findings indicate that this explicit approach produced significantly higher scores than the implicit approach.

However, there was no significant difference between the treatments for the Simple rule. Table 4 presents the total Simple Rule items correct for each treatment and the Chi-square tests for significance for the Post- and Delayed-Post-Tests showing no

significant difference.

Table 4. Simple Rule Post-Test and Delayed Post-Test by Treatment Total Items Correct (N) and Chi-square Tests for Significance

Post Test - Simple Rule			Delayed Post Test - Simple Rule		
Explicit	**Implicit**	X^2	**Explicit**	**Implicit**	X^2
(N = 860.0)	(N = 822.0)	0.81 p > .05	(N = 789.0)	(N = 778.0)	0.06 p > .05

The findings show that for the Simple rule there was no significant difference between an explicit, teacher-directed instructional approach and an implicit, grammar-discovery approach on the Post-Test (X^2 = 0.81 p >.05) or the Delayed-Post Test (X^2 = 0.06 p >.05). This lack of a significant difference in learning the simple rule between the groups may be very 'significant' or at least complicated. Perhaps the most important finding is that one method is not better than another for Simple rules.

Whereas the explicit treatment groups as a whole showed significantly higher learning of the Complex rule thereby favoring the explicit over the implicit approach for Complex rules, these findings indicate that implicit instruction is just as effective as explicit for Simple rules. The findings suggest that teachers could spend the majority of their limited, grammar-teaching time on complex structures and allow the students to induct the simple rules themselves. Therefore, methods do matter for particular forms--as in the case of the Complex rule, but not for others--as in the case of the Simple rule.

Do Methods Have to Match Proficiency Levels?

The findings indicate "no." According to certain theories (Pienemann, 1985; Robinson, 2003), the increases in learning of the complex form should have been highest for the advanced learners and lowest for the beginners, but this was not the case.

Although all proficiency levels showed a significant increase in learning the complex forms regardless of treatments, the findings demonstrated that the greatest increase in learning the Complex rule was at the Beginner level. Table 5 presents Chi-square tests for significant increases in learning by proficiency levels of the complex rule--regardless of treatment.

Table 5. Tests for Significance and Direction of Increase in Learning the Complex Rule by Proficiency Levels

Pre-Test to:	Post Test				Delayed-Post Test			
Proficiency	**Beg.**	**Int.**	**Adv.**	**Total**	**Beg.**	**Int.**	**Adv.**	**Total**
Complex Rule	X^2 = 143.20	X^2 = 56.47	X^2 = 17.87	X^2 = 176.39	X^2 = 124.0	X^2 = 57.03	X^2 = 26.01	X^2 = 168.92
	p < .01	p < .01	p < .01	p < .01	p < .01	p < .01	p < .01	p < .01

The more specific findings do not support various SLA theories which state for intake to occur, the forms must match the LL's developmental or proficiency level. One such theory not supported by the findings is the Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann, 1985), which holds that effective instruction must proceed from simple to complex and must be introduced according to proficiency levels and aligned with the interlanguage (IL) of the LL. Nor did the findings support one part of the Cognition Hypothesis, which holds that the structures and tasks must be sequenced based on their cognitive complexity and also be in line with the LL's IL (Robinson, 2003). The beginners in this study did amazingly well right after instruction and still retained the learning on the Delayed Post Test. This attests to their ability to learn forms beyond their developmental (or proficiency) level as well as learn forms which were not introduced sequentially from simple to complex.

Table 6 presents the total results of the tests for significance for the complex rule by treatment for all proficiency levels.
It compares the pre-test to post-test and the pre-test to delayed-post test.

Table 6. Complex Rule Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Delayed-Post-Test Tests for Significance with Direction by Treatment and Proficiency Level

Treatment	Explicit				Implicit		
Level	Beg.	Int.	Adv.	Total	Beg.	Int.	Adv.
Pre-Test	NS (119.0)	NS (251.0)	NS (339.0)	NS (709.0)	NS (99.0)	NS (267.5)	NS (322.5)
Post Test	$X^2 = 14.99$ $p < .01$ (335.5)	NS (384.5)	$X^2 = 5.20$ $p < .05$ (446.0)	$X^2 = 8.55$ $p < .01$ (1166.0)	(241.5)	(407.0)	(379.5)
Delayed Post Test	$X^2 = 13.20$ $p < .01$ (303.0)	NS (393.0)	NS (455.0)	NS (1151.0)	(219.0)	NS (400.0)	NS (406.5)

NS = No Significant Difference

The findings show that the learning was significantly higher in the Explicit treatment group as a whole versus the Implicit group as a whole. However, the fact that the Explicitly-taught Beginners also significantly increased the learning of the Complex rule supports research by Swain (1995) and Tarone and Lui (1995). They agree that just producing the targeted forms ('pushed' output), even if they are beyond the learner's present ability, could force acquisition. The findings demonstrate that Beginners have the ability to learn complex forms implicitly without explicit instruction.

The findings further indicate that even though the explicit group at the advanced level scored higher on the complex rule than the other two proficiency levels, the *Implicit* group at the *Beginner* level maintained significant learning even on the Delayed-Post-Test while the *Explicitly*-taught *Advanced* group did not. The findings demonstrate that both the explicit and implicit groups at the Beginner proficiency level were very able to learn and retain complex forms which are not even introduced in the grammar series at the beginner level. Therefore, they have the ability to intake

forms beyond their proficiency level.

The findings did seem to support one part of the Cognition Hypothesis (Robinson, 2003), in that as far as structures are concerned, explicit instruction can be helpful in building the LLs' explicit knowledge which they, in turn, can access in building their useable implicit knowledge. However, although the explicitly taught groups did show significant gains over the implicitly taught groups especially at the beginner and advanced levels, further study needs to be conducted on IL development.

Future Considerations and Research Suggestions

The lack of a significant difference between the treatments for the simple rule at any proficiency level requires additional studies. The results may have been influenced by limitations in the study or confounding factors. Time might have been a limiting factor. For example, the simple rule was taught at the beginning of the study, followed by the presentation of the complex rule. Because of this, the simple rule may not have had the undivided attention it needed. A suggestion might be to present and test the simple rule separately from the complex.

A confounding factor of attendance or rather lessons missed may have had an influence on the results for the complex rule especially at the intermediate and advanced levels. The explicitly-taught group as a whole had a significantly higher absentee rate than the implicitly-taught group as a whole. However, the explicitly taught group showed a significantly higher learning of the complex rule over the implicitly-taught group. Perhaps the results would have also been significantly higher for the complex rule at the Intermediate level if the lessons missed had been fewer. Also for the same reason, perhaps the explicitly-taught, Advanced group would have retained the significant learning of the complex rule on the Delayed-Post-Test. In order to better analyze the impact of missed lessons, keeping more detailed records of class absences is recommended for future studies.

According to Fotos (2002), the success of implicit instruction depends on abundant communicative opportunities in class and much exposure outside of class. This exposure helps maintain awareness of the target form. One might conclude that implicit instruction would be more successful in the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classroom than in the English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) classroom. It would seem that the findings in this study might have been in the direction of implicit instruction over explicit (since this study was in an ESL setting.) However, this was not true. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that the majority of the students was from one language group and that group tended to use English--only in the classroom.

A future study involving 'the majority within the minority' would broaden the research and open the interest-level to the socio-, psycho-linguistic fields. Future research done on settings might attempt to differentiate between the language groups. A quantitative study similar to this one (in an ESL setting) could be done specifically comparing the results from the limited language groups at the different proficiency levels with the majority language group. A qualitative element could also be added to try to find if influences such as motivation or power seemed to make a difference in learning of the forms.

Since this study dealt mainly with input, future research can include a different stage in the learning process, for example: feedback (from the teacher and/or from other experiences with the targeted forms.) Although significant, perhaps the total learning would have been even more significant--or maybe different--for both groups if out-of-class assignments were required. The assignments could be designed to follow the explicit/implicit nature of this study.

Another intriguing side-observation, which may in fact be a very important emerging result in need of more research, has to do with the implicit group as a whole. Even though the explicit group as a whole did significantly better on the grammar tests than the implicit group, perhaps the explicit treatment only influenced that groups' explicit knowledge and had no effect on their implicit knowledge. The findings showed that even though the differences between the groups were not significant on the Simple Rule, the implicit group increased the learning of the rule on the Delayed-Post-Test while the explicit group did not. This raises an important question: What if the implicit group was somehow incorporating the forms into their implicit knowledge--bypassing the explicit-knowledge step? Maybe the implicit group could not explain what it was they learned by counts on a grammar test, but they would have been able to demonstrate long-term, implicit knowledge gains in their writing and oral communication.

Therefore, future studies can be done to see how accurately and productively students use the structures learned in their written and oral production. [A study by Andrews (2007) dealing with the written production by these same students has been conducted, but it is yet unpublished.) A qualitative study could also be done to measure such traits as frustration or enjoyment or to see if students felt their needs and expectations were met by the method or class.

A most important additional consideration (having to do with explicit-implicit knowledge) which needs more research is whether the explicit knowledge of grammar rules really was integrated into the LLs' interlanguage. Even though the results did seem to demonstrate learning of rules, the question remains: has explicit *knowledge* really become *implicit*? Therefore, future studies should seriously consider designing writing samples to be used as the measure of learning not just correct items on a grammar test because writing often provides the LL with time to perfect productive expressions and to demonstrate critical thinking abilities as well as provide the teacher a peek into the LL's interlanguage continuum.

Practical Applications

In light of the findings, decisions can be better made by secondary curriculum designers as to the role of L2 courses in a college-prep program. There are a number of questions to be considered in making those decisions, for example: Is the class objective to teach conversation, or is it to provide a certain amount of structural literacy about the L2? Is the goal of the content for the students to be able to get by in the local community, or is it to lay a foundation for future creativity and course work in college? Does the approach/method attempt to capitalize on pre-existing L1 or L2 linguistic knowledge, or is it designed to provide a new cultural L2 experience? Whatever the ultimate design of the curriculum, explanation and clear direction need to be effectively communicated to the site managers and classroom teachers (if direct

intervention is, indeed, chosen) so the implementers can have confidence and courage in their language leadership and lesson planning.

Often parents and students complain after having studied a L2 for two years or more, that the student knows nothing and cannot speak a word of the L2; teachers are left feeling like failures. There are a number of possible reasons for this reoccurring problem. However, a few causes might be avoided by addressing questions like the following (before the fact and not after): Was the purpose of the class clearly defined to the constituency? Was a formal, college-prep class mistakenly planned and taught with very little structure as if it were a casual course in conversation or culture? On the other hand, was a conversation class taught only by focusing on the rules? Not only must the motivation for learning a L2 be clearly established and capitalized on, but also must the purpose, intent, and methods be aligned. Then the curriculum can better match the needs and expectations of the LLs.

Concluding Statement

One goal of SLA is to explain the external and internal factors that account for why learners acquire a L2 in the way they do, and many studies have been done! However, much of the research has been contradictory. This is because single-focused studies have been applied to different sets of variables. Then there has been a lack of replicable research on the successful implementation into classroom settings of clearly-defined pedagogy on the coupling of a grammar-based approach into a task-based communicative approach. Therefore, those in the SLTL field need to consider establishing a research-based framework of grammar-teaching protocols. In light of this study, if the class is for academic purposes--especially for adult LLs who can tap into L1 linguistic knowledge and cognitively process new L2 forms during a structural presentation--those in charge might want to seriously consider an explicit approach especially for complex structures. For the college-prep L2 instructor who is presenting complex concepts and also feeling the need to maximize in-class learning, the teacher-directed, explicit instruction for complex rules is an option to be seriously considered.

A case can be made here that the researchers might need to take another look at classroom teachers who have studied SLA theories, have been eclectic in methodology, and have implemented what works for them, and like others have found that the teaching of grammar points produces measurable results. Considerations must include not only the multiple aspects of pedagogy but also the motivational needs of the LLs. Furthermore, those protocols must be able to be realized and successfully implemented in the classroom not just presented in laboratory. Such class-researched protocols are necessary so that teacher-prep programs can include procedures in their methods courses. These protocols are useful so that present teachers can confidently include certain steps in their lesson plans. But ultimately, they are important so that language learners can successfully integrate new and often complex concepts into their interlanguage.

Then methods will matter and teaching will make a difference.

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