Effects of Combining Isolated and Integrated Form-focused Instruction on Developing Students' Productive Skills

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Meaning-based Instruction

- Advocated due to the failure of intensive grammar to improve language proficiency
- Primarily focuses on content
- Students are provided ample amount of input for comprehension and acquisition purposes

Form-focused Instruction

- Focuses on teaching grammar/language
- Long (1991) proposed *focus-on-form* (i.e., incidental teaching of linguistic forms) and *focus-on-forms* (i.e., explicit teaching of linguistic forms via isolated and intensive treatment)
- Spada and Lightbown (2008) proposed *isolated FFI* and *integrated FFI*.

Integrated FFI

- Attention to form is embedded within a communicative practice
- Linguistic items may have been anticipated, have been planned for, or have occurred incidentally during actual communication
- Meaning is still the primary concern of integrated FFI
- Allows learners to fully integrate language form to communicative interactions and allows learners to spontaneously attend to language form contextually

Isolated FFI

- Attention to form is separated from meaning-based portions of the lesson
- Does not refer to meaningless drills, presentation and practice of discrete point grammar rules, and mechanical repetition
- Supported by skill acquisition theory (DeKeyser, 1998) which states that there is a need to explicitly teach grammar to achieve a maximum of understanding

Related Studies

- Some studies focused on learner preferences (e.g., Ansarin, Abad, & Khojasteh, 2014)
- Others focused on determining the effects of each of these two forms of instruction on language development (e.g., Elgün-Gündüz, Akcan, & Bayyurt, 2012; File & Adams, 2010; Spada, Jessop, Tomita, Suzuki, & Valeo, 2014).

Theoretical Support of the Disctinction

- Anchored on transfer appropriate process (TAP) which claims that learners access knowledge best in a condition similar to how they were inputted or learned (Franks, Bilbrey, Lien, & McNamara, 2000; Segalowitz & Gatbonton, 1995)
- TAP takes its roots from information processing theory (VanPatten, 1996; 2007) which states that human mind has limited attentional capacity

Context and Participants

- 41 ESL learners
- 11 were assigned to the control and the other 30 to the treatment group
- Enrolled in an English Communication Arts

Instruments

- Israeli National Oral Proficiency Test
- Pretest and posttest in writing

Israeli National Oral Proficiency Test

- a multi-format oral proficiency testing model which covers oral interview, group discussion, reporting task, and role-play
- analytic marking scheme rating scale was used to determine the level of students' oral performance during the pretest and posttest (Weir, 1993)
- Carroll's 9-band interview assessment scale was adopted to determine the specific band level and description of the students' performance (Weir, 1993, p. 44)

Pretest and Posttest in Writing

- Writing performance was measured through essay writing
- Participants were given one and a half hours to write a 200-word essay
- Mark Scheme 2: TEEP Attribute Writing Scale was used (Weir, 1993) to determine the level of students' writing performance during the pretest and posttest
- Carroll's global impression band scale was adopted to determine the specific band level and description of the students' performance (Weir, 1993, p. 44)

Results

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of pretest-posttest in speaking.

Groups	Speaking Performance				
	Mean			*SD*	
	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	Pretest	Posttest
Treatment Group (*n* = 30)	5.922	11.611	+5.689	1.597	2.354
Control Group (*n* = 11)	6.576	9.757	+3.181	1.065	1.999

Results

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of pretest-posttest in writing.

Groups	Writing Performance				
	Mean			*SD*	
	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	Pretest	Posttest
Treatment Group (*n* = 30)	5.578	14.456	+8.878	2.551	2.326
Control Group (*n* = 11)	6.726	10.727	+4.001	3.279	3.567

Results

Table 6. Participants' overall gains by paired t-test.

Groups	Skills	n	*t-value*	*df*	*p*
Treatment Group	Speaking	30	-10.9539	58	<0.0001
	Writing	30	-14.0836	58	<0.0001
Control Group	Speaking	11	-4.6588	20	.0002
	Writing	11	-2.7388	20	.013

Results

Table 7. Difference between the posttest performance of treatment group and control group.

	Posttest		
	t-value	*df*	*p*
Speaking	2.319	39	0.0206
Writing	3.9183	39	0.0065

Discussion

- The findings suggest that combining isolated and integrated FFI can significantly improve the speaking and writing performances of students.

Reasons for the Improvement

- Amount and type of input students are exposed to
- Use of parallel syllabus that promoted noticing and form-meaning connection
- Additive effects of combining isolated and integrated FFI

Pedagogical Implications

- Two separate courses (i.e. isolated FFI and integrated FFI) be offered as basic English course for college students.
- This type of integration would address the individual differences of students through its differentiation techniques such as mixed-level grouping, diagnostic task, and self-assessment.
- This study provides support for striking a balance in exposing students to productive, receptive, and linguistic tasks if the aim is to develop the macro skills of students.

Conclusion

- The present study revealed the complementarity of isolated and integrated FFI in developing the productive skills of students especially when these two types of FFI are combined.
- The significant improvement in students' writing and speaking performance can be attributed to noticing, form-meaning connection, exposure to various forms of input, and additive effects of simultaneously implementing isolated and integrated FFI.

Recommendations

- Experimental design with three different groups being compared (i.e., isolated FFI only, integrated FFI only, and combined isolated and integrated FFI)
- More wide-ranging experiment that uses a larger number of samples in multiple instructional and proficiency levels be conducted

THANK YOU!