

Thinking Allowed

Research into practice: Grammar learning and teaching
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Introduction

Krashen's stance on excluding grammar teaching from classroom instruction. Grammar teaching centered on accuracy of form and rule learning, and with mechanical exercises seen as the way to bring about the learning of grammar (Jean & Simard 2011). There are comparison between teachers and researchers in terms of Grammar teaching as a traditional method saying that **Grammar pedagogy** has received from **researchers**. After all, a number of researchers themselves have warned against *the direct application of research findings to language pedagogy* (e.g., Hatch 1978) or even that deriving pedagogical implications should be the purpose for doing research. Change must be initiated from outside the classroom. The intent of much second language acquisition (SLA) research on grammar instruction has been to improve practice. Survey research reveals that grammar is still being taught traditionally in most classrooms in a non-integrative manner. Teachers and students see values in grammar studies both important and very important.

The textbook publishing industry, as well as educators' relative conservatism and resistance to innovation, are common targets for center of gravity in education. I'll review the research selectively and limit my comments to three areas: **1)** where I believe research has had little impact (the non-interface position), **2)** where it has had a moderate impact (form-focused instruction), and **3)** where it has the potential to have a large impact (the interface position) (reconceiving grammar).

1) Grammar with no impact

Grammar teaching was said to have very little effect on the natural language acquisition process as for SLA research reported that learners adhered to a natural order of acquisition, at least for certain English grammatical morphemes, and a natural sequence of development for certain syntactic structures, such as question formation in English (Krashen hypothesis). Also humans possessed 'built-in syllabuses----conscious grammar instruction would not contribute to subconscious language acquisition because it would not develop learners' grammatical competence (Chomsky's Universal grammar). Krashen maintained that there was a non-interface between what is taught and learned explicitly and the implicit knowledge necessary for fluent communication.

Counter claim Krashen's theory: the ideas were criticized by researchers, who found fault with the unfalsifiability of his claims (McLaughlin 1978) and the failure to consider the importance of learners receiving feedback on their performance (White 1987). students enrolled in Canadian French immersion programs pointed out that after years of the type of instruction Krashen recommended, fundamental errors of grammatical form persisted (Harley & Swain 1984). Since then, other researchers have pointed to the nature of classroom language and its lack of linguistic complexity and variety. **Krashen's exclusive focus on comprehensible input** but but it wasn't sufficient. The ability to understand another language usually outweighs the ability to speak it. As a result, encouraging students to express themselves clearly would be beneficial because it would require them to learn to process language syntactically as well as semantically. **Krashen** tried to protect his non-interface stance from 1993, claiming that students' learning and practicing of rules is only of limited value (Krashen 2011). He also claimed that language can be learned without learners producing any language, and that opportunities for learner production in the classroom were already limited (Shehadeh 2002).

"You may have noticed that a number of recent books appear to be celebrating "the return of grammar to the center stage of language teaching and learning," although one of them puts it (Tonkyn 1994: 12). However, in all of my years of teaching, grammar has always considered center stage." (Thornbury, 1998: 19)

Questions: why it is that teachers have not abandoned explicit grammar instruction as they have been advised to do. The answer is because of the power that **students' and teachers' attitudes and beliefs** have, no doubt informed by their own learning experiences (Borg 1999). Schulz's (2001) and Jean & Simard's (2011) research, which surveyed **attitudes** about grammar teaching among students and teachers of a variety of languages, concur 'The main findings suggest that grammar instruction is perceived by both students and teachers as necessary and effective, but not something they **enjoy doing**' (Jean & Simard 2011: 467).

Questions : why teachers' views are seemingly entrenched. The answer is that teachers are not autonomous agents; they are embedded in educational systems that are frequently still dominated by *high-stakes grammar-based examinations*, limiting the extent to which teachers can reduce their attention to grammar (Littlewood 2007).

Questions : why the non-interface position has not had more of an impact is due to **the strength of long-standing views** on the importance of grammar teaching by **teachers** and by those who set **educational policy**.

The view between teacher and researcher —> As Richards (2008: 173) observes, we frequently take for granted that our teacher education programs are effective at modifying teachers' beliefs. 'However, research consistently confirms that there is little evidence of immediate change in teachers' practices as a result of training (Waters & Vilches 2005).' And perhaps no change should be made in response to SLA research findings, as SLA researchers frequently seek to define the bare minimum necessary to explain language acquisition. What is minimally required is not always what is optimal for classroom instruction or for all learners, *particularly for those whose only contact with the target language occurs in the classroom*. One would hope that instruction would accelerate rather than mimic any natural acquisition process (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991).

2) Research findings that have had modest impact: Form-focused instruction

Teaching grammar should not be banned, but that communication should be foregrounded; importantly, grammar instruction should be carried out in a manner that does not interfere with natural acquisition. Long (1991) favors '**focus on form**' teaching, which calls learners' attention to grammatical forms as they arise while learners are communicating, as opposed to a '**focus on forms**' approach, which employs a traditional structural syllabus with its sequence of discrete pre-selected grammar structures. **Input made comprehensible** through *interactional modifications comprehension* checks (e.g., 'you know what I mean?'), as well as *unobtrusive feedback*, such as teachers correctly reformulating or recasting students' ungrammatical utterances. Some researchers, *form-focused instruction includes* a pre-emptive treatment of grammatical form, which is often initiated by students, and which can be integrated into meaningful language use (e.g., Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen 2001).

Focus on 4 form-based examples :

- *Giving learners explicit rules*
- *inductive/deductive rule-getting*
- *input-based instruction, and*
- *focused tasks*

Giving learners explicit rules :

others have claimed that while most language acquisition takes place implicitly as learners use the language, explicit knowledge does have a role in affecting implicit knowledge by recruiting learners' consciousness, thereby enhancing their ability to recognize patterns while they are negotiating meaning (N. Ellis 2005; see also Leow 2001). *The explicit instruction may be disassociated from usage*. If the conditions of learning and the conditions of use are not aligned, transfer appropriate processing may not ensue. another reason is that learners are reluctant to give up their 'one form one meaning' (Andersen 1984) strategy, where they have adopted one form to meet their communicative needs. The fact that *grammatical acquisition is a gradual process*, which may involve learners' interlanguages progressing through transitional stages (Ellis 2008). There is increasing evidence that explicit attention to grammatical form can contribute to spontaneous production. discuss grammar explicitly in '*language related episodes*,' ---where students talk together about the language they are using and discuss which correct form they should produce.

Deductive and inductive rule-getting :

A discovery learning approach would favor *induction*, with the added benefit that students learn how to figure out the rules on their own. One approach for combining induction and deduction to promote students' awareness involves using a '**garden path**' strategy (Tomasello & Herron 1988, 1989)---- Students are given partial information about a grammar structure, thus making it seem easier than it is, or in other words, students are 'led down the garden path.' For example, students might be given a rule without being told its exceptions. Applying *sociocultural theory* to grammar instruction — students

receive assistance from the teacher in figuring out the rules rather than the teacher's providing the students with explanations, or the students' being left on their own to figure out the grammar explanations. Learners favor a deductive approach, where they are provided the rules

Input-based instruction :

input-based instruction requires learners to attend to problematic grammatical form during structured input activities. The contention is that learners need processing instruction that is focused on verb tenses in the input. A meta-analysis of studies of the effectiveness of comprehension versus production-based instruction suggests that a combination of input processing and production activities may be most effective. Most processing instruction research is limited in that it is short-term, limited to only a few grammatical structures, and is typically limited to students who are college-aged. The importance of providing students with activities that engage them in processing crucial form-meaning links in comprehension activities. Input enhancement can be done through for example by boldfacing or otherwise highlighting certain grammatical forms in a written passage or by making features of oral language more prominent. 'flooding the input' with many uses of a particular grammar structures. however, more explicit enhancement appears to lead to more L2 learning progress than less explicit enhancement.

Focused tasks

'*focused tasks*' (Ellis 2003, 2009), tasks which call for students to use certain grammar structures in order to satisfy task demands (Larsen-Freeman 2003), such as when students are given a map and asked to direct a classmate to a particular location. 'Things-in-pocket' task, designed to create opportunities for students to use epistemic modals. Different tasks, such as jigsaw listening, and spot-the-difference, featured attention-promoting designs that made them useful, drawing learners' attention to L2 structures and formulaic sequences (Nguyen 2014) that are difficult to notice through classroom interaction alone.

in the classroom

why it gives small impact because it might be its small- scale decontextualized experimental approach. DeKeyser (1998), and Swan (2005) dispute the claim that the traditional pedagogical sequence of presentation, practice, produce (or PPP) has failed.

Question : why research has been less consequential in affecting practice widely. Answer might be there is not a great deal of consensus among researchers. knowing grammar rules confers a certain authority. Learner security is one reason why Larsen-Freeman (2000) suggests giving students **REASONS** as an alternative to rules, which may seem arbitrary. Reasons allow learners to see why things are the way they are, reducing the arbitrariness of grammar explanations. There is the matter of individual differences among teachers as well. The efficacy of certain practices may be determined by a host of factors, such as learners' literacy (Tarone & Bigelow 2005), their proficiency (Ammar & Spada 2006), or their goals (Larsen-Freeman 2006). Teaching and learning are complex and situated endeavors. Instruction in general, are differentially frequent and effective, depending on *setting, learner age, proficiency*, and type of L2 structure . . . as well as developmental stage and task.'

3) Where research has the potential to be more effective: Reconceiving grammar

Grammar actually has to do not only with *form* and *meaning*, but also with use in texts, which I define as knowing when to use a grammar structure where two or more structures convey more or less the same semantic meaning: when to use phrasal verbs rather than their single verb counterparts, for instance, or when to use the past tense instead of the present perfect to comment on prior experience. I have long maintained that students need to know about the use of structures so that they understand the consequences of their choices (see, e.g., Larsen-Freeman 2014a) --Pragmatic failure — Some of the research on grammatical options has been done **using functional frames of analysis**, for example, a **concept-oriented approach** (Bardovi-Harlig 2007) and a **systemic functional linguistics** (SFL) one (Halliday & Matthiessen (2004). SFL = research on academic language based on content in content or theme-based language instruction (CBI) and content language integrated learning (CLIL) language instruction. **Corpus linguistics** have beneficial application for language teaching particularly in dealing with lexicogrammatical patterning and the difference between oral grammar and written grammar.

Language can be as social practice which the instructional point of departure is not the discrete form, but rather 'the conceptual meanings that are being expressed that denote ways of feeling, seeing, and being in the L2 world' (2009: 24). **The grammar system** is not closed, but is rather constantly evolving, due to the creativity of its users as they make new meanings, making it impossible to distinguish errors from linguistic innovations without an appeal to sociopolitical factors, such as who is doing the talking (Larsen-Freeman 2012a, 2014b). No one denies that rules can describe a grammatical system, but is it rules that are acquired, or is it, instead, that students learn patterns from exemplars?. Exemplars might at some point lead students to induce a rule, but it is equally plausible that language-using patterns remain as instances in learners' memories, emerging as they do from the language that both language learners and fluent speakers of the language experience. Reason to consider is that **grammar is a lexicogrammatical resource for making meaning.**

Students would be better served learning grammar through iteration, which modifies their grammatical resources rather than simple repetition that copies them exactly (Larsen-Freeman 2012b) and by teaching students how to adapt their language resources to ever more complex situations (Larsen-Freeman 2013).

Conclusion

there exists a chasm between this research and the practice of teachers. The most important contribution of research to practice is to challenge teachers to think differently, to experiment with new practices, and to help them make the tacit explicit by cultivating new ways of talking about their practice (Borg 2010; Pedrazzini & Nava 2012)