A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF INPUT-AND OUPUT-BASED INSTRUCTION ON EFL ALGERIAN LEARNERS' GRAMMAR PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated the effect of input- and output-based instruction on EFL Algerian learners' grammar performance .The treatment conditions were implemented with thirty-eight young adult EFL learners in two intact classes from the English Department. The two groups were randomly assigned to one input-only group (n =19), and one input-plus-output group (n = 19). The input-only group was given comprehension practice only. The input-plus-output group was given both comprehension and production practice. A pretest/treatment/post-test design and comprehension and production tasks were used as both the pre- and post-tests. Descriptive statistics indicated that the second group outperformed the first group.However, the statistical analysis (Anova) revealed that the instructional effect did not amount to statistically significant learning gains.*

KEYWORDS: **Input comprehension, Output practice, Linguistic Forms,**

INTRODUCTION

The Algerian educational authorities deem the study of English so important that all students in higher education (universities and other higher education institutions), regardless of their field of study, are required to learn English as a second foreign language . Despite official commitments the level of competence of students in English has not been as high as expected. Recent(though limited) research into ELT in Algeria has revealed problems faced by the learners in a number of areas. For example, some studies have highlighted grammatical difficulties. Moumene (2010) has commented that the ability of graduate students is low and their performance in English poor; that acquisition of grammar remains the prime problem of learners.Working mainly with adult learners, the issue of grammar instruction has been our concern for some time. Early in our teaching career we were swept along by the communicative language teaching(CLT) approach,with its focus on providing learners with opportunities for authentic communication, and our main concern was whether to teach grammatical structures at all.

More recently, given the theoretical and empirical evidence which supports some form of grammar teaching in the classroom, particularly to intermediate to advanced learners,our main concern has shifted to how to teach grammatical structures to such students.Teaching the Grammar-course to English Department students for many years, we observed that students' performance is far below the accepted level. For example, we have observed that first year students enrolled in the English department, like other students at other levels, have

gaps in their knowledge in the use of certain L2 linguistic features such as the use of English tenses and grammatical aspect.Many learners fail to learn the intricacies of the English tense system and show limited use of tense and aspect forms, even of basic verb morphology. This interferes with the accuracy of students' L2 production (output), especially in the written form.At the same time, it constitues a major pedagogical preoccupation facing teachers in the Algerian EFL context. As noted by Moumene (2010) English tenses seem to be a problematic area for Algerian students who show limited use of the various tense forms and uses for expressing their ideas. Studies on the role of grammar instruction in second language acquisition have generally investigated whether specific grammatical structures can be acquired through formal instruction (e.g.,White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991). Increasingly, however, the focus of research is shifting to investigation of what methods of instruction yield significant effects (e.g., Doughty, 1991; Norris & Ortega,2000.).

While there is a consensus that it is important to help learners become more accurate in their target language production there, this general agreement, nonetheless, disguises diversity which has led to advocating different ways to draw learners' attention to the formal aspects of the target language, including (1) explicit rule-based instruction(the teaching approach adopted by English department)**;** (2) output practice; (3) ; (4) input-based practice (in the form of textual input enhancement and input flood); (4) input processing instruction; and (3) interactional feedback. These approaches cover a broad continuum ranging from a very narrow and implicit view of grammar instruction to a more explicit view. Furthemore, studies comparing various approaches to grammar instruction are still few and far between (Ellis,2008).

New instructional approaches, therefore, need to be further researched in order to optimally achieve the objectives of language education especially in the Algerian EFL context. The present study contributes specifically to the existing research literature that investigates the effects of specific instructional approaches on developing learners' grammar performance by assessesing the role of input and output practice in learning L2 morphosyntax.From the teacher's point of view, the key question is this: to what extent should instruction be directed at developing form-meaning connections through comprehension practice only as opposed to providing opportunities for learners to practice both in comprehension and production tasks?.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Input based Grammar Teaching Versus Output-oriented Practice
There is by now ample evidence to show that form-focussed instruction has a positive effect on second language acquisition SLA. Norris and Ortega (2000) in a meta-analysis of 49 FFI studies found that not only did formal instruction make a difference but also that it made a very considerable difference. Their analysis also found that form-focused instructional environments resulted in more accurate and advanced learning outcomes than those based on implicit approaches and that the effects of FFI were durable. Today, most researchers agree on the need for formal instruction for learners to attain high levels of accuracy(Doughty 1998). As the discussed above,while research in second language acquisition has emphasized that formal instruction is essential for language acquisition,there is considerable disagreement on how to present problematic aspects of the target language. Two types of formal instruction that are most relevant to the present study and which has received considerable attention over the last few years are Input-based instruction and explicit rule presentation.The remaining of

this discussion will present and discuss each of these as well as provide some example studies that examined the effect of such treatments on learning target grammatical structures.
Input based instruction, according to Ellis (1999), 'involves an attempt to intervene directly in the process of L2 learning by manipulating the input to which learners are exposed'(p.65),

However,there are various approaches to L2 instruction that prioritize input, many of them proposing innovative ways of manipulating the input in order to maximize learning outcomes.In contemporary input-based approaches to L2 instruction or what has become known as 'Input Enhancement' (Sharwood,1993) various pedagogical input-based instructional techniques have been devised to help learners pay attention to grammatical forms while also providing them with the input they need.Two of the most common forms of input-based instructional techniques that are operationalised in this study are input flood and textual or visual input enhancement. Textual enhancement consists of 'typographically highlighting a particular grammatical structure in written passage'Cowan, (2008: 41). Some of the techniques employed include boldface type, italics, underlining, different font types, colors or sizes.The aim of textual enhancement is 'to render more salient particular features of written input that learners normally may not notice and make form-meaning connections for' (Wong 2005:49). Input flood or input enrichment 'exposes learners to input rich in some specific linguistic feature' and 'requires them to process this input primarily for meaning'(Ellis, 2001:19).The target feature appears with high frequency but with no textual manipulation; the teacher or researcher manipulates oral or written input in order to saturate it with the targeted linguistic form.

Theoretically, 'something that is very frequent in the input is likely to be noticed' (Gass, 1997:17) and integrated into the interlanguage system. Another the foci of the present study was output-based instruction. In contrast to input-based instuction practice, production-based practice aims at providing learners with opportunities to engage with the L2 productively i.e. through speaking and writing (Ellis 1997).A a component of EFL instruction, production practice encompasses different kinds of language-related performance but most methodologists distinguish between controlled and free practice. Ellis (1997:90) refers to these two types of practice as 'text-manipulation' and'text-creation activities''Text-manipulation supply learners with the sentences to produce and ask them to operate on them in some limited way- fill in a blank, make a choice from items supplied, substitute another item, transform them into some other pattern, and so on'.On the other hand,'Text-creation activities require learners to produce their own sentences containing the target structure'. Many L2 teachers upgrade the importance of classroom activities that push students to produce the L2 either in speaking or writing. As noted by some scholars the view that L2 production is an important part of learning' constitutes a central part of 'traditional' foreign language teaching methodology' (DeKeyser,Sokalski 2001:83). However, some SLA researchers reject any role whatsoever for traditional practice-oriented instruction and alternatively suggests engagement in tasks encouraging comprehension of the targeted feature over production. VanPatten for example, criticized the form of output-based instruction practiced in traditional classrooms claiming claiming that language proficiency results from comprehension rather that production practice (2004).

Recent views about SLA, however, have shifted from production practice as a way of practicing already-existing knowledge to a way of creating linguistic knowledge (Gass,1997:139, Gass and Selinker, 2008).According to Swain's(1995,2000, 2005),

Comprehensible Output Hypothesis opportunities to production practice are as important to linguistic development as opportunities to comprehension practice. Swain argued that learners may well understand the meaning of an utterance without reliance on its morphology or syntax but that when they wish to convey meaning they must be able to manipulate and structure their interlanguage production.In other words,output practice may stimulate learners 'to move from the semantic,open-ended strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production'(Swain, 2000:99). However,among various means or approaches of getting learners to pay attention to L2 forms, the role of output has received comparatively less attention from researchers.In the present study, although the model of teaching used in the output-oriented teaching method is essentially based on the traditional production-based approach to grammar instruction, some classroom applications of the research on the output hypothesis (e.g. dictogloss tasks) have been included in the instructional treatment(see section 3.4).

Previous Studies

Several strands of studies in SLA over the last decade have attempted to theoretically and empirically address the role comprehension and production practice in language learning. Two strands of relevance to the present study(include : studies based on the comprehensible output hypothesis (Swain 1995,2000, 2005) and input vs output studies. Representative of output-focused research in L2 learning is Swain and Lapkin's study (1995 and elsewhere). Swain and Lapkin (1995) showed L2 learners became aware of the gaps in their linguistic knowledge while producing the L2 and analyzed their knowledge of the L2 in order to solve their problems, applied various strategies to overcome the problems and engaged in particular thought processes.These thought processes which are assumed to facilitate L2 learning included :a) applying L1 meanings to L2 contexts b) extending L2 meanings to new L2 contexts,and c) hypothesis formulation and testing about language forms and functions (pp. 383-4). Influenced by Swain's output hypothesis, Schinichi Izumi and colleagues (Izumi et al., 1999; Izumi and Bigelow, 2000; Izumi, 2002; Izumi and Izumi,2004) also tested the Output Hypothesis by examining the effects of output on noticing, how it contributes to interlanguage development, and how it relates to input. Izumi, (2002) showed that learners engaged in output activities outperformed those who were exposed to the same input for purpose of comprehension in terms of their learning gains.Input vs output studies specifically focused on the exploration of any differential effects of input-based as compared to output-based instructional conditions . However, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions since they employed various designs, investigated different output-based options and compared them with some specific input-based techniques (Morgan-Short and Bowden, 2006). Nevetheless, they can be classified as follows:

i) Findings by Erlam (2003) indicated that comprehension-based and production-based instructions are equally effective in promoting L2 knowledge,
ii) Studies by Allen (2000);Toth (2006);Morgan-Short and Bowden,(2006) suggested the superiority of output-based over input-based instruction
iii) A study by DeKeyser and Sokalski (2000:105) found that 'comprehension and production skills in an L2 are to some extent learned separately' i.e., L2 instruction via input-based practice will only serve to develop learners'ability to comprehend the target feature, not to produce it.

The current study attempts to investigate the validity of the above-mentioned claims through teaching a complex syntactic feature (English tense and grammatical aspect) using two instructional treatments that range in the level of explicitness with which the target feature is presented.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Considering that we could easily and conveniently gain access to intact classes, the present study was quasi-experimental in character and was conducted by the participants' regular teacher in the course of normally scheduled classes.

Quasi-experimental designs, as asserted by Seliger and Shohamy, do not disturb ongoing programmes and are less disruptive to participants' normal teaching and learning since they are 'constructed from situations which already exist in the real world', they are 'more representative of the conditions found in educational contexts.', and 'are more likely to have external validity' (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989:148-149).

The students remained in their original groups as allocated at the beginning of the academic year. Two groups of learners were allocated to one of the two treatment options : (1) an input-only group that received output-free input based instruction and (2) an input-plus-output group that received both input- and output- oriented instructional material .

Based on the research reviewed above, we posed the following research question and hypotheses:

Research Question:Does a combined use of input-based and output-based grammar practice result in greater learning than when only input-based instruction is provided ?
In terms of performance, it was hypothesized that both types of instruction would have positive effects , but that the input-plus-output group would show an overall greater improvement in their use of the target structures than learners with input-based instruction only.

Hypothesis 1: input-based grammar teaching(consisting of textual input and input flood) would lead to improved performance as measured by tasks assessing production and comprehension of the target features.
Hypothesis 2: input-based and output-based grammar practice would lead to improved performance as measured by tasks assessing production and comprehension of the target features
Hypothesis 3: input-based grammar teaching combined with output-based grammar practice will enable learners to comprehend and to produce the target features more effectively than input-based pratice alone

Participants

The participants of this study were all Algerian undergraduate students taking their first semester in a BA(license) course in English Studies. In this programme, the first two years(four semesters) are mainly devoted to teaching language skills (reading, writing, grammar, etc.). The teaching approach adopted by the department during the first two semesters places an emphasis on developing communicative skills in English although there

is also a considerable amount of content teaching.The main focus of the remaining two years is on teaching some academic linguistic , literature and civilisation courses. Admission into this course was based on the learners' ability to meet any one of the following criteria: (1) a given score on the Baccalauréat examination and (2) a given score on the English language examination.

Targeted Linguistic Structures
Tense and grammatical aspect were chosen as target features of the study for several reasons. Firstly, the acquisition of tense and aspect figure among the central grammatical categories in L2 learning Secondly, they occupy a prominent place in the grammar syllabus of the BA degree.Thirdly,as Cowan (2008) noted that the acquisition of tense and aspect is the most problematic area of English grammar for EFL students after the English article system. Cowan proposed several factors as responsible for the difficulties in learning to use tense and aspect including L1 influence, individual learner characteristics, and instructional variables(p.379).It is beyond the scope of this study to solve controversial issues concerning the acquisition of temporal expression in English.The focus, in this study, is on the role of instructional intervention on the development of a learner's system of tense-aspect.

Instructional Treatments
 Two sets of teaching materials were prepared on the basis of grammar handbooks, coursebooks and online grammar sites contained the same number of activities, oral/written activities. The set of materials cover sixteen 90-minute classes spread over the period of four weeks and took place during regularly-scheduled classes of grammar. The set of materials designed for the input -only group consisted of explicit instruction, inut -based activities where learners engage with language receptively in the form of listening and reading tasks that did not require immediate production of the targeted structure. Activities used both aural and written stimuli but most of them were written.In accordance with the pedagogical options available for input-based instruction, the types of input enhancement used in this instructional package included input flood textual enhancement. The set of materials designed for the input-plus-output group consisted of the same instructional activities..In addition the participants worked on a number of production-based mechanical, meaningful and then communicative written and oral activities.The mechanical and meaningful activities limited or controlled students' language production while the communicative activities reflected normal communication. In line with the output hypothesis other recent output-oriented tasks, all of which involve language production, were also employed in the present study. They mainly included: i)Dictogloss (a form of dictation which 'require learners to process the whole text at once' (Cowan, 2008: 41).Students listen to a short text and then work individually (in pairs or in small groups) reconstruct the text from memory and some notes and ii) Input-output cycles (an integrated skills technique for language learning in which students learners read (or listen to) a text and individually or in pairs work to write a reconstructed version of the text).

 The following examples reveal how rule-based instruction, input enhancement output-based practice were operationalized in the study:

Textual enhancement

The Canterville Ghost

There **was** a horrible storm that night, but apart from that nothing scary **happened**. The next morning, however, when the family **came** down to breakfast, they **found** the terrible stain of blood once again on the floor. Washington **cleaned** it a second time, but the second morning it **appeared** again. The third morning it **was** there, too, although the library had been locked up at night by Mr Otis himself. *(continued)*

(English Grammar Online ,2005)

(Excerpt from The Canterville Ghost, by Oscar Wilde)

Input flood (oral input)= has +verb+ed

No Wrong Numbers

Mr James Scott has a garage in Silbury and now has just bought another garage in Pinhurst.Pinhurst is only five miles from Silbury, but Mr Scott cannot get a telephone for his new garage, so he has just bought twelve pigeons.(Continued)

(Practice and Progress,1973,p.21)

Explicit rule instruction

The simple past Form ed inflection (verb +ed)**;**Other changes on irregular verbs

Basic Meanings

We use the Simple Past to express the idea that an action started and finished at a specific time in the past. Sometimes, we may not actually mention the specific time, but we do have one specific time in mind. There can also be a few actions happening one after another(examples)

The Simple Past can be used with a duration which starts and stops in the past. A duration is a longer action often indicated by expressions such as: for two years, for five minutes, all day, all year, etc. (examples)

Addditional tense meanings for the simple past.

The Simple Past can also be used to describe a habit which stopped in the past. It can have the same meaning as 'used to' .we often add expressions such as: always, often, usually, never, (examples)

Output-Practice and manipulation of grammatical forms

Irregular past simple verbs:Correct the mistake with the past simple in each of the sentences.

a) I was sick yesterday. I go to the doctor's.

b) I see the thief go into the house.

(self designed)

Dictogloss Task

-Listen to the folllowing text

Text for Dictogloss Task : The simple past ,the present perfect simple and progressive

Hot snake

At last firemen have put pout a big forest fire in California.Since then they have been trying to find out how the fire began.Forest fire are often caused by broken glass or by cigarrette ends which people carelessly throw away. *(continued),* Practice and Progress1973,p.135)

Input output cycles:
Step1- Read the passage and underline the parts that you feel are particularly
necessary for its subsequent reconstruction (Input1)

Step2- Put the passage away . Reconstruct the passage as accurately as possible (Output 1).

Step 3-Class discussion . Important ideas are written on the black board

Step4- shown the passage a second time (Input 2) and were directed to underline it as in Step 1.As in step 2 ,reconstruct the text as accurately as possible on another output sheet(Output 2).

Text for reconstruction

A Disastrous Dinner
Last Friday, Mrs. Anderson planned to have a delicious dinner. She bought a T-bone steak and some cream and apples for an apple pie.(Continued)
(Verb Tenses,2004)

Testing
A pretest/posttest design was adopted to assess the impact of the two types of formal instruction on the learners' interlanguage system. The same test was used as a pre- and posttest which was conducted immediately after the treatment session.The test comprised both interpretation (Grammaticality judgement test) and written production tasks (a written gap-fill test and a Picture description task)

RESULTS

To answer the research question proposed for the study, the results data were analyzed to determine a)whether there were any significant changes within groups regarding their performance over time, and b) whether there were any significant differences between groups regarding their performance after the treatments.

Comparison of baseline performances on the pretests
Pretreatment equivalence of groups in their knowledge of English verb tenses and grammatical aspect was checked by submitting the pretest scores to statistical analyses. As demonstrated in Table 1 , the pretest Mean differences in the two groups were quite marginal : On the GJT the pretest Mean was at 19.52 for the comparison group (Input-only) and 19.26 for the experimental group (input-plus-output) ; On the written gap fill production task, the pretest mean score was at19.50 for the comparison group , and at 16.37 for the experimental group. The pretest mean score was 19.50 for the the comparison group , and 16.37 for the the experimental group on the written gap fill production task.On the picture desciption task the pretest mean score was 4.02 for the comparison group , and 4.70 for the the experimental group .ANOVAs performed on pretest scores indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the scores and that is why it can be safely concluded that learners' performance on the reception and production of the target structure was similar at the time of pretesting.

Test	Input-only			input-plus-output		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
GJT (Max/36)	19.52	4.68	19	19.26	4.17	19
Written gap fill Production (Max = /34)	19.15	8.75	19	16.37	7.76	19
Picture description (Max/10)	4.02	0.92	17	4.70	1.10	17

Table1: Descriptive Statistics for Pretest

Comparison of students' mean performance on pretest and posttest

For the sake of clarity, the presentation of results is divided in two parts. The first part concerns the data referring to the reception of the targeted feature, whereas the second part has been devoted to the examination of the results of the tests tapping the participants' production of the target feature.

Reception data

Results of scoring for reception data are presented in Table 2 the experimental group (input-plus-output) with a mean of (Mean =19.50) outperformed the comparison group (Input-only) (Mean = 18.89) on the posttest. A one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of input practice only and input-based instruction combined with output practice on the posttest scores as measured by the grammaticality judgement posttest .

Test	Input-only	Input –plus-output
Grammaticality Judgement		
Pretest		
Number	19	19
Mean	19.52	19.26
Standard Deviation	4.68	4.97
Posttest		
Number	19	19
Mean	18.89	19.50
Standard Deviation	4.14	5.26

Table 2 :Descriptive statistics on reception data

The results (Table 3) showed that there was no statistically significant difference at the $p<.05$ level between the mean scores in the posttest of students who received their verb tense practice through reception-based tasks in combination with production-based and those who

only used reception-based practice. What still remained to be seen is whether the differences between the pre- and post- test for the groups were significant and attributable to the different practice methods. Repeated Anova

Source of variation	Sums of squares	Degress of freedom	Mean square	F
Between groups	3.4803	1	3.4803	0.16
Within groups	808.2895	36	22.4525	
Total	811.6997			

The significance level is p<.05
Table 3: One-way ANOVA on GJT

indicated that the mean scores were not significantly different over time (Treatment group F(1,18)= 0.02, p=0.889 ; F(1,18)= 0.02,p= 0.889 ; comparison group F(1,18)=1.15,p= 0.297) (See Appendix C for statistical tables).Thus, there was no significant loss of learning for comparison group on the receptive measures between pretesting and and posttesting

Production Data
The results of the production tests are displayed in Table 4.This table shows that the subjects from the experimental group showed better performance on the written gap-fill production tests (M = 17.39) tests (M = 17.39) than subjects from comparison group (M = 16.28). However, ANOVA results (table 5) revealed that there was no statistically significant difference at the p<.05 level in test scores for the two groups. The F observed value for the effect of treatment the is 0.56 .This amount of F-value at 1 and 36 degrees of freedom is lower than the critical F, that is, 4.11 for both tests.This might indicate that both types of instruction are capable of bringing about important changes in the learners' performance as as measured by the written gap-fill production posttest. On the picture description task, table 4 reveals that the subjects from the exerimental showed better performance (M = 5.75) than subjects from the comparison group (M = 5.52).

Test	Input-only	Input-plus-output
.		
Written gap fill production(Max= /34)		
Pretest		
Number	19	19
Mean	19.15	16.37
SD	8.75	7.75
Posttest		
Number	19	19
Mean	16.28	17.39
SD	5.25	4.55
Picture description (Max/10)		
Pretest		
Number	17	17
Mean	4.02	4.70
SD	0.89	1.10
Posttest		
Number	17	17
SD	1.93	1.34

Table 4 :Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest/Posttest

Source of variation	Sums of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F
Between	11.6053	1	11.6053	0.56
Within	748.9474	36	20.8041	
Total	760.5526	37		

The significance level is p<.05
Table 5: One-way ANOVA on written gap fill production tests.

The ANOVA results shown in Table 6 indicated that there was a statistically significant difference at the p<.05 level in scores for the two group.

Table 6: One-way ANOVA on picture description tests.

Source of variation	Sums of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F
Between	0.1176	1	0.1176	0.04
Within	88.3235	32	2.7601	
Total	88.4412	33		

The significance level is p<.05
Table 6: One-way ANOVA on picture description tests.

Repeated Anova procedures for each group indicated that the mean scores did not significantly changed from pretest to posttest . (Treatment group $F(1,16)=6.3, p=0.02$; comparison group $F(1,16)= 11.66, p=0.0035$). This means that the differences between the pre- and post- test for the two groups were significant and attributable to the different practice methods.

DISCUSSION

With regard to the first hypothesis about the effects of condition of learning, the various the overall results did not seem to show significant effect on learners' comprehension of the target structure.. The results of the analysis of the tasks testing the production of the target structure also suggested that input-based activities alone did not result in a gain in ability to produce the target form as measured by the first production task.

Hypothesis 2 was partially confirmed in that slight but statistically insignificant progress was observed in the input-plus-output group between the pretest and posttest. on the interpretation task and one of production tasks. However both groups improved significantly on the second production task, though the input-only group received no production practice.This finding do lend less support to skill-acquisition theory which claims that comprehension and production do not draw on the same underlying knowledge source i.e., L2 instruction via input-based practice will only serve to develop learners'ability to comprehend the target feature, not to produce it(Ellis,1999:67).

The analysis findings in relation to the effect of the treatment type (hypothesis 3) do not seem to fully substantiate the hypothesis for the superior role of input-plus-output

instructional treatments over that of input-based instruction grammar instruction.There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups on the receptive and productive tests, although for both tests the mean scores of the input-plus-output group were higher than those of the input-only group. Thus, in answer our research question , it cannot be stated with confidence that a combined instructional treatment had a significant effect with respect to learners' comprehension and production of English tense and grammatical aspect.The descriptive results , however, show a trend consistent with the initial research question the input-plus-output learning condition would show an overall greater improvement in their use of the target structures than learners with input-based instruction only.

It also is important to consider these findings in relation to other studies that have examined the effects of comprehension and production practice.To start with, the insufficency input-based instructional techniques as a means to induce positive changes in learners' L2 ability is supported by Overstreet (2002) and White (2001) who demonstrated that input-based grammar instruction may not be sufficient for learning to occur. On the other hand, the findings seem to be partially consistent with the general trends observed in other studies providing support for the positive effects of production-based instruction where the output conditions did result in greater learning than did the non-output conditions.For instance, Erlam's (2003). study showed that when instruction incorporates output-based practice, meaning-oriented output activities in particular, they might be more effective for developing both comprehension and production abilities than when only input-based instruction is provided.The results of Izumi's (2002) study also showed that output instruction benefited learners to a greater extent than a comprehension-focused instructional treatment for the acquisition of English relativization. .

Why was the impact of the intervention in this study not so promising ? why the receptive and productive measures failed to reach statistical significance ? One reason that the impact of the intervention was not as significant as we might have expected, might be that the participants come from an instructional context in which L2 grammar instruction (if any) is quite traditional and explicit.The students are probably less used to learning in the implicit conditions demanded by the type of input tasks such as enriched input and enhanced input or recent classroom applications of the Output Hypothesis such as dictogloss and input-output cyles. The students most likely would have benefited more from (a) giving them a longer training period at the beginning of the experimental period, (b) extending the experimental period to the whole semester, or even (c) extending the time allocated for each session which would have given students more time to build up confidence in classroom activities. Another related reason that may explain the findings is the individual differences. Although the participants'individual differences were not inspected, it might be assumed that the measure of success in the two groups that underwent the treatment was not so much the type of instruction they received but their individual characteristics, their positive attitude and eagerness to learn. An attempt to establish how many of the participants actually benefited from the treatment and whether the gain was maintained over time would have helped to interpret the collected data more fully.Erlam's (2003 :193-197) study demonstrates that the cognitions and perceptions the participants hold might be of greater significance than the mode of instruction in a particular group which means that individual variables have to be carefully considered when exploring the effectiveness of different options in L2 instruction.Future research can shed more light on this issue.

IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

From a theoretical perspective, this study stresses the important roles of output (in addition to input) in L2 learning and contributes to the understanding of the efficacy of L2 teaching interventions more specifically, to the body of comparative studies on input vs. output oriented approaches. The results of the study carry implications concerning an emphasis on input-only vs.input-plus-output orientations. They show that apparently one is more effective than the other. Although it seems warranted to say that the kind of teaching that focuses learners'attention on the target structure without requiring them to produce it better complies with natural processes involved in learning a foreign language (VanPattern, 2000), the outcomes of the present research project indicate that this approach may fail to provide learners with the means to develop better control of the forms in question. Pedagogically, the results of the quasi-experimental study bear some implications for L2 instruction. They seem to support the use of output practice (less implicit) as well as input-based practice(more implicit) in the L2 classroom environment as a means for building grammatical accuracy. In this study, each of the two approaches utilized resulted in slightly different outcomes that can benefit teachers and researchers in making certain decisions concerning the teaching of problematic feature such as English tenses and grammatical aspect.Although the instructional materials incorporating the principles of a combined output- and input-oriented approach are scarce and rare, their preparation is not very problematic as evidenced in the samples provided. .However due to some the limitations of the study one needs to take great caution in generalizing the results.One first limitation of this quasi experimental study that needs to be improved in future research is the short duration of the treatment. Secondly, no measure assessing the long-term effects of the two practice methods beyond the 8-week period was implemented because the participants sat for their end of year examinations six weeks after they had finished taking part in this study. Thus, the longer-term effects remain to be assessed.

CONCLUSION

The main outcomes of this study indicated that the absolute predominance of any of the two approaches i.e. input-only vs.input-plus-output was not established in this quasi experimental study.However, despite the relative complexity of the structures and the brevity of instruction, the participants in the experimental group (input-plus-output learning condition) managed to attain a (although not statistically) attain better control(although not statistically significant) of the target linguistic forms , as evidenced by the descriptive results.

From a theoretical perspective, though it may be hard to give an answer to the debate between the different views on grammar teaching, this study stresses the important roles of production (in addition to comprehension) practice and contributes to the understanding of the efficacy of teaching intervention, more specifically, to the body of comparative studies on particular options in grammar teaching. Pedagogically, the results seem to the offer some evidence that, for grammar instruction to be successful, total exclusive reliance on either an implicit or exlicit instructional approach may not be sufficient. A combination of both forms of instruction is necessary, especially when the form is a complex one. Accordingly in designing L2 materials, both teachers and educators need to find the appropriate way to incorporate various types of formal presentation of certain grammatical structures into the L2 curricula. At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that the weight given to the two grammar options is bound to be the function of the inherent characteristics of a particular

educational context as well as the specific conditions in which teachers operate. There surely exists the need to explore the issue much further and future research, which also targets other populations and additional grammatical features need to be carried out to determine if the differential effect of the instructional treatments applies more broadly.

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