

## Conclusions and Implications

The main aim of the present work has been to explore the effectiveness of production-oriented and comprehension-based instructional options in the teaching of grammatical features in the Polish educational context. The preliminary theoretical considerations included in [Introduction](#) provided a relevant background against which both non-interventionist as well as interventionist positions in language teaching were presented in [Chap. 1](#). In [Chap. 2](#) the focus of attention was shifted to Input Processing Theory, one of the theoretical frameworks emphasizing the beneficial effects of input-based instruction. The presentation and discussion of the theoretical, empirical and pedagogical arguments for the facilitative effects of reception-oriented intervention in the form of processing instruction and interpretation tasks served as an introduction to the two empirical chapters which provided an account and discussion of the findings of four quasi-experimental studies. Although absolute superiority of any of the approaches was not established in the course of experimentation, a number of observations were made as to the differential effects of the treatments on the development of the learners' control over various grammatical structures. The fact that the participants of the studies were university students, at the intermediate or advanced level of proficiency, determined the choice of grammatical structures targeted by the experimental treatment. They had to be challenging, on the one hand, to match the students' level, and on the other, pose considerable difficulty in terms of the operation of default processing strategies. Nevertheless, despite the relative complexity of the structures and the brevity of instruction, the participants managed to improve, as evidenced by the short- and long-term results, particularly with respect to the reception of the targeted form. The treatment that comprised both types of intervention, output-oriented and input-based, turned out to be the most beneficial. Therefore, it can be concluded that the proper orchestration of carefully designed meaning-based output practice alongside reception-oriented instruction is capable of yielding the most beneficial results.

Definitely, it would be imprudent to assume that the findings of the four studies constitute sufficient grounds for the formulation of far-fetched pedagogic proposals, and there surely exists a need to explore the issue much further; however, some tentative suggestions seem admissible. Since successful interaction involves both production and reception of language forms, the intervention excluding either output-oriented or input-based practice could be described as insufficient and incomplete, particularly in view of the fact that the double benefit—gains on both production and reception—promised by the proponents of processing instruction were not always observed. It seems legitimate to say that effective grammar instruction should ensure that learners are provided with ample opportunities for output in the course of meaning-oriented activities coupled with reception-oriented practice facilitating extracting richer intake from the input learners come into contact with. Thus, appealing to the natural processing mechanisms each learner makes use of offers a unique opportunity to overcome the natural constraints of attentional resources and allow better and faster development. This opens the possibility for effective development of implicit knowledge, particularly with respect to non-optimal strategies learners employ while processing input. Providing learners with structured input activities does not mean that the most commonly used PPP sequence needs to be abandoned. The provision of information on the operation of the default strategies seems to naturally fit the presentation stage where formal aspects of a targeted structure are discussed. The same stage could also be supplemented with structured input activities which entail the analysis of exemplars or response to the target form in the course of affective structured input activities. Input-based activities could also be applied during the practice stage, an important qualification being that reception-based practice should proceed output-based activities to ensure extended exposure to the instances of the structure targeted by intervention without pushing learners to produce it before they can exercise better control over it. Moreover, as recommended by Pawlak (2008, p. 38), comprehension-oriented teaching could make the usually boring and rarely productive review classes more productive by allowing learners to attend to the form, meaning and function connections of the grammatical forms introduced, thus facilitating the realization of divergences between their own target language knowledge and the native-speaker ideal in the course of meaning and message conveyance. Similarly, structured input activities could play an important role in remedial teaching which aims at the refinement of the knowledge the learner has already been exposed to. Quite encouraging appears the fact that structured input activities could be used with learners at all levels including elementary ones, since the response to a clue does not require the use of sophisticated language, but rather ticking, matching, or drawing symbols, which is not exceedingly demanding. Although the instructional materials incorporating the principles of processing instruction are still few and far between, their preparation is not overly problematic and can draw upon commonly used sources.

Obviously, it needs to be remembered that, notwithstanding the numerous advantages of the incorporation of input-oriented techniques into the PPP sequence, the implementation of the novel approach in the language classroom

may not proceed without difficulty, since, as observed by Pawlak (2008, p. 38), “(...) it should be kept in mind that the weight given to the two approaches 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”. Taking into account the limited number of language lessons and scarce out-of-class exposure, lack of ready-for-use materials, as well as teachers’ and learners’ preferences and beliefs, shifting the focus from output practice to a more input-oriented stance may be hard to envisage. Even worse, there seems to be very little common ground between language teachers and researchers and rarely are the theoretical developments translated into practical applications. As a result, without further empirical investigations and the provision of recommendations and the development of materials for classroom use, it is difficult to imagine that processing instruction could find its way into the language classroom.

The research reported in the foregoing chapter has brought up another crucial issue concerning the effectiveness of instruction, namely the impact of individual differences on its outcomes. As documented by the experiment results, the scores obtained by the weakest and most successful students in the treatment groups turned out to be more dependent on their learning style, preferences, or general attitude to learning than the selected instruction mode. All this, apart from raising serious concerns with reference to the results of research projects, testifies to the importance of taking into account the characteristics and preferences of individual learners. Inspecting students’ preferred learning styles, identifying their intelligence type does not have to be a time-consuming and absorbing task, since ready-made questionnaires are easily available and adaptable for various levels of learners. The precious classroom time spent on surveying learners’ differences will not be wasted if the questionnaires are treated as additional language practice or a starting point for the discussion of learning styles, strategy use, etc. The tasks and activities as well as presentation procedures accounting for students’ needs are most likely to intensify the process of learning and yield better results. A solution to a situation where many learning styles are represented in one class could be providing students with a wide array of tasks matching different learner types that they could choose from depending on their preferences and needs. Allowing learners to take important decisions concerning their learning, or discovering characteristic features pertinent to the progress they make might contribute to fostering autonomy and promoting self-directedness, the aim many teachers would like to accomplish.

It is the hope of the authors that the implementation of the recommendations outlined above will make grammar instruction more advantageous and conducive to the attainment of higher levels of accuracy and better control of linguistic forms. The regard for accuracy appears to be particularly important at the time when the national curricula no longer set a premium on the study of the formal aspects of language instead opting for a more communication-oriented approach, often at the expense of the precision of expression. At the same time, however, it would be unwise to apply the above guidelines without examining of the characteristics of the teaching context, including the beliefs, attitudes, preferences and needs of both

learners and teachers. While such research is still hard to come by, it would undoubtedly be imprudent to prematurely pledge allegiance to a particular instructional option to the exclusion of others and this principle surely applies to the choice between production-oriented and comprehension-based grammar teaching. In fact the authors fully agree with Nassaji and Fotos (2011, p. 139) who write that “(...) teachers should be eclectic in their pedagogical approach (...) they should choose and synthesize the best elements, principles and activities of different approaches to grammar teaching to attain success”. Such a stance is indeed a practical necessity given the fact that different instructional options may prove to be more or less effective taken the realities of the educational context, the characteristics of the targeted structures or individual differences between learners.

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