

Title: Is the Explicit Instruction of L2 Grammar Necessary?

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Given the limited nature of classroom time, the language instructor must determine the most efficient way to impart to the adult learner the immense amount of information associated with learning a second language. Research suggesting that L2 learners implicitly induce grammatical structure has led some instructors to deem explicit grammar instruction unnecessary and, in some cases, even detrimental to the process of L2 acquisition. Thus the present paper aims to provide useful information addressing the basic question: Is explicit grammar instruction necessary?

To address the aforementioned question, an experiment was conducted to measure the effect of explicit instruction on the acquisition of Russian verbal morphology. A total of 53 Russian students (24 classroom, 23 study abroad) participated in the experiment by completing a series of translation exercises designed to elicit traditionally instructed and traditionally uninstructed verbal morphology. In addition to the translation exercises, participants responded to a series of written questions designed to measure their declarative knowledge of the targeted morphology.

Results from the experiment stand in contrast to the notion that L2 learners implicitly induce grammatical structure, as they suggest a strong relationship between declarative knowledge and the production of normative verbal morphology. Results from the experiment also suggest a causal relationship between explicit instruction and declarative knowledge. The experiment generated scant evidence of implicit learning among the 53 participants; however, results do suggest that the immersion environment significantly increases the likelihood that an L2 learner acquires traditionally uninstructed verbal morphology.

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