

Implicit and Explicit Language Teaching

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“I am not having my exercise book.”



Implicit FFI

- attracts attention to target form
- is delivered spontaneously (e.g. in an otherwise communication-oriented activity)
- is unobtrusive
- presents target forms in context
- makes no use of metalanguage
- encourages free use of the target form

Explicit FFI

- directs attention to target form
- is the main focus and goal of a teaching activity
- is obtrusive
- presents target forms in isolation
- uses metalinguistic terminology
- typically also involves controlled practice of the target form

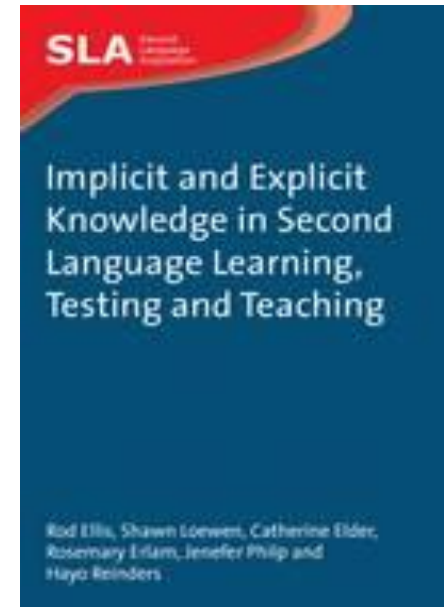
Implicit vs. explicit knowledge

Explicit knowledge is the knowledge that learners can draw on in when they have time for controlled processing.

Implicit knowledge is the intuitive, automatized knowledge needed to participate effectively in communication.

Interface positions

1. Non-interface position
2. Strong interface position
3. Weak interface position



Explicit grammar instruction



Types of explicit instruction

Explicit instruction can take a number of different forms.

These forms involve different theoretical assumptions concerning the roles of explicit information and the different kinds of practice activities.

Deductive vs. inductive

In deductive instruction, learners are provided with metalinguistic information about the target of the instruction.

This can occur in the presentation stage of the lesson or while learners are engaged in practice activities.

In inductive explicit instruction no metalinguistic information is provided.

In the Audiolingual Method controlled production practice is employed to develop correct 'habits'.

In Consciousness-Raising Instruction, learners complete a series of tasks that guide them to an understanding of the target feature.

Types	Instructional approaches	Interface position	Theoretical basis
Deductive	Presentation-practice-production (PPP)	Strong	Skill-learning theory (DeKeyser, 1998)
Deductive	Integrated instruction	Strong	Transfer Appropriate Processing
Deductive	Concept-based instruction (involving presentation of 'scientific concepts' and production practice)	Strong	Sociocultural theory (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006)
Deductive	Comprehension-based instruction (as in Processing Instruction)	Strong	Input Processing Theory (VanPatten, 1996)
Inductive	Pattern practice (as in the Audiolingual Method)	Strong	Behaviourism (habit-formation)
Inductive	Consciousness-raising instruction (involving consciousness-raising tasks)	Weak	Theory of Instructed Language Learning (Ellis, 1994)

Presentation-Practice-Production instruction

- PPP assumes a strong interface between explicit and implicit knowledge
- DeKeyser (2003) suggested the end result may not be 'true' implicit knowledge but rather speeded-up declarative knowledge

Researching PPP

Does PPP result in the learners' ability to communicate freely using the language feature targeted by the instruction?

This requires showing that the instruction results in improved accuracy in free production (i.e. in tasks that elicit spontaneous communication).

Harley (1989)

- 319 Grade 6 students in a French immersion program in Canada
- Explicit instruction including communicative practice activities; instruction lasted several weeks
- Two French verb tenses (passé composé and imparfait)
- Various measures of learning including free oral production
- Experimental group outperformed control group on all measures

Some caveats

1. The studies investigated target features that the learner had already partially acquired – not completely new linguistic features.
2. The studies are typically product-based and thus do not tell us how the instruction facilitated learning (e.g. the effect of corrective feedback).

Integrated explicit instruction

Explicit instruction is embedded within communicative practice activities.

Transfer Appropriate Processing Hypothesis:

“we can better remember what we have learned if the cognitive processes that are active during learning are similar to those that are active during retrieval” (Lightbown, 2008:27).

Spada et al (2014)

- Target structure – English passive
- Isolated instruction - target structure first explained followed by communicative activities
- Integrated instruction - quick explanations provided during communicative practice
- Assessment - written error-correction test and a picture-cued oral production task.
- Both types of instruction effective:

The isolated instruction → higher scores on the error-correction test

integrated instruction → better on the oral production task.

Concept-based instruction

Concept-based instruction emphasizes the importance of developing ‘conceptually organized grammatical knowledge’ using descriptions that explain in detail the link between form and semantic/ functional concepts.

Rules-of-thumb versus ‘scientific descriptions’.

Systemic-functional instruction (Gal'perin)

- 1) organized around coherent theoretical units
- 2) provides a material instantiation of the target concepts
- 3) requires learners to verbalize the concept-based explanation

The tree in the garden does not have leaves
El árbol *del* jardín no tiene hojas



Negueralá & Lantolf (2006)

- 12 university students in a Spanish as a foreign language course
- explicit instruction consisted of a flow chart that led the learners through a series of questions to help them understand use of preterite and imperfect tenses in Spanish.
- students verbalized the flow chart while carrying out oral and written activities
- The students' verbal explanations of the grammatical structures were collected at the beginning and end of the course.
- Simplistic and incomplete learner explanations replaced by more coherent and accurate explanations.
- The learners able to use the formal features associated with the target concepts more accurately at the end of the course.

Some limitations

1. Beneficial effects more clearly evident in students' written work than in their oral production (i.e. no clear evidence of gains in implicit knowledge).
2. Not a comparative study.

Comprehension-based instruction

Two questions:

Is explicit explanation followed by comprehension-based activities sufficient for learning to take place?

Is comprehension-based instruction more effective than production-based instruction?

Processing instruction (VanPatten)

‘A type of grammar instruction whose purpose is to affect the ways in which learners attend to input data’



Three components

- Explicit explanation of the target structure.
- Explicit strategy training to enable learners to overcome the default processing strategy.
- Structured input activities.

Shintani's (2015) meta-analysis

- 42 comparative research experiments involving Processing Instruction.
- Processing Instruction superior to production-based instruction in the receptive tests
- Overall no significant differences between the two types of instruction in the productive tests.
- Production-based instruction was superior when both groups received the same explicit information. In other words, explicit information proved of greater importance in production-based instruction.

Limitations

1. Relatively few grammatical structures have been investigated to date
2. Shintani found that the effects of Processing Instruction on both receptive and productive knowledge atrophied over time.
3. Third, very few of the studies included measures of learning based on free oral production.

Pattern practice

Pattern-practice is closely associated with the Audiolingual Method and behaviourist theories of habit formation –mimicry and memorization of these stimuli play a major role.

A type of inductive explicit instruction.

Gothenberg Project (Levin)

- Different groups of learners engaged in pattern practice either with or without grammatical explanations.
- No significant differences between the inductive and deductive groups of school learners were found - very little learning occurred.
- Older learners benefitted most from the deductive method.

“Practice does not make perfect”

Sometimes controlled practice can have a deleterious effect on learning by interfering with natural acquisition processes and causing learners to overuse the structure they have practised intensively (Lightbown, 1983).

Consciousness-raising instruction

I have used the term 'Consciousness-raising Instruction' to refer to instruction based on tasks designed to help learners to construct their own explicit rules about structural features without any practice activities.

Rationale

Weak-interface hypothesis

Consciousness-raising tasks aim to help learners construct an explicit representation of a target feature which can then be used to facilitate the processes involved in the development of implicit knowledge (e.g. 'noticing' and 'noticing-the gap').

Prepositions of time

Underline the prepositions

I made an appointment to see Mr. Bean at 3 o'clock on Tuesday 11th February to discuss my application for a job. Unfortunately, he was involved in a car accident in the morning and rang to cancel the appointment. I made another appointment to see him at 10 o'clock on Friday 21st February. However, when I got to his office, his secretary told me that his wife had died at 2 o'clock in the night and that he was not coming into the office that day. She suggested I reschedule for sometime in March. So I made a third appointment to see Mr. Bean at 1 o'clock on Monday 10th March. This time I actually got to see him. However, he informed me that they had now filled all the vacancies and suggested I contact him again in 1998. I assured him that he would not be seeing me in either this or the next century.

Prepositions of time (cont.)

Write the time expressions in the table

AT	IN	ON
at 3 o'clock		

Prepositions of time (cont.)

Make up a rule.

We use 'at' with _____

We use 'in' with _____

We use 'on' with _____

Eckerth (2008)

- university level learners of German
- two tasks (a text reconstruction task and a text repair task)
- the learners worked in pairs completing tasks that required them to attend to the ways in which grammatical form, meaning, function, and context were interrelated.
- Results - significant gains in explicit knowledge which increased over time

Limitations

Limited evidence that the explicit knowledge gained from performing consciousness-raising tasks facilitates the processes involved in the subsequent development of implicit knowledge.

Fotos (1993)

Corrective feedback

Arguably the single most important factor in explicit instruction:

- promotes attention to form
- helps learners to carry out a cognitive comparison between their deviant utterances and the correct target-language
- pushes learners to produce the correct form.

Corrective feedback

	Implicit	Explicit
Input-providing	Conversational recasts	Didactic recast Explicit correction Explicit correction + metalinguistic explanation
Output-prompting	Repetition Clarification requests	Metalinguistic comments Elicitation Paralinguistic signal

(adapted from Lyster, Saito & Sato, 2013:3)

Research

Three key results:

- explicit corrective feedback (e.g. explicit correction or metalinguistic explanation) more effective than implicit feedback (e.g. recasts or clarification requests).
- Output-prompting feedback (e.g. elicitation) more effective than input-providing feedback (e.g. recasts).
- Graduated feedback can help scaffold internalization of new grammatical forms

Some conclusions

1. Importance of communicative practice in PPP instruction.
2. Instruction that includes explicit explanation may be more effective than instruction that consists only of practice activities.
3. Timing of the explicit information may affect the type of knowledge (explicit or implicit) that results but this awaits fuller investigation.
4. Relative effects of rule-of-thumb and scientific concepts explanation in need of further investigation.
5. Consciousness-raising tasks help develop explicit knowledge which may facilitate the processes involved in developing implicit knowledge.
6. Both comprehension-based and production-based practice activities have been found to be effective.
7. Corrective feedback plays an important and possibly essential role in the effect that explicit instruction of any kind has on learning.

Implicit Instruction

Definition

Implicit instruction is instruction designed to facilitate incidental acquisition by attracting learners' attention to linguistic form while they are primarily focused on meaning.

Implicit instruction does not assume that the learning that takes place is also implicit.

Focus on form

Attention to linguistic form while learners are primarily focused on meaning.

It can be achieved :

- by highlighting specific target forms in the input.
- through interaction where learners have opportunities to use the target forms, receive corrective feedback, and then modify their own output.

Text-enhancement

Text enhancement can occur by:

- ‘flooding’ the input with exemplars of a specific feature
- highlighting a specific form through intonation in oral input or by bolding, italicizing or paraphrasing a specific form in written input.

In both cases the aim is to induce ‘selective attention’ (i.e. noticing) of pre-determined linguistic forms.

Effects on acquisition

Text enhancement does result in noticing but overall its effect is quite small (Lee & Huang, 2008).

Its effect on acquisition is also small and it disappears over time.

Text enhancement may help learners to see what is grammatically possible in the target language but it does not help them to eradicate an erroneous rule.

Task-based language teaching

Implicit grammar instruction involves the use of focused tasks, which can be input-based or output-based.



Some key studies

	Shintani & Ellis (2010)	Doughty & Varela (1998)	Samuda (2001)
Learners	6 year old complete beginners in Japan	Middle school ESL students in USA	Adult ESL learners in intensive language programme
Target structure	Plural-s	Past tense	Epistemic models
Type of task	Focused input-based	Focused output-based	Focused output-based
Main results	All children developed receptive knowledge of plural-s; some also developed productive knowledge.	Learners developed productive knowledge of past tense; learning maintained over time.	Learners began to use target structure more frequently and more accurately.

Some conclusions

1. There needs to be a functional need to process the target feature and this is only possible in implicit instruction when the grammatical features contributes to meaning.
2. Mere exposure to the grammatical targets in input – even if these are meaning-bearing – has limited effect.
3. Instruction that draws learners' attention to the target structure through focus-on-form in TBLT is more likely to have an effect
4. Explicit focus-on-form may sometimes be needed – as in Samuda's study.
5. Input-based tasks of the kind used in Shintani's study can help learners acquisition of a completely new structure by developing receptive knowledge.
6. Implicit instruction that involves learners in producing the target structures while they are primarily engaged in performing a task may be needed to ensure acquisition of productive knowledge.

Conclusion

Comparative effectiveness of explicit and implicit instruction

1. Norris & Ortega (2000) – explicit superior
2. Spada & Tomita (2009) – both explicit and implicit effective
3. Shintani (2011) – implicit superior to explicit

Final comment

Overall explicit instruction has been shown to be superior for both grammar and vocabulary.

But:

- Not all forms of explicit instruction are successful, especially when learning is measured in free production.
- Acquisition of linguistic competence needs to be considered alongside acquisition of interactional a competence.

Thank you!

