

Discussion on the Effectiveness of Instruction and the Flaws of Experimental Research Studies

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In comparing, synthesizing, and evaluating findings from research studies between 1980 and 1998, Norris and Ortega (2000) asserted that research questions have evolved from simple to more sophisticated ones. For example, research studies initially focused on the effectiveness of instruction in general, and later shifted to looking at which types of instruction, in particular, are more effective. Norris and Ortega also drew attention to the effectiveness of explicit versus implicit teaching as well as Focus on FormS versus Focus on Meaning versus Focus on Form. Furthermore, the authors examined the duration of instructional effects. Teachers and teachers-in-training are likely to be drawn to two issues: the effectiveness of instruction and the flaws of experimental research studies that measure its effectiveness.

The main idea that Norris and Ortega (2000) convey is that instruction assists language learning, a welcome assertion for both second language teachers and learners. Instruction is distinctively important in EFL settings where classroom instruction is the main source of input for learners, and is even more effective for L2 adult learners. The Norris and Ortega article provides encouraging evidence that L2 instruction is effective, be it explicit, implicit, or a combination of the two, and that instruction may produce lasting effects on learners. It would be worthwhile to investigate the mechanisms behind these durable effects. In light of the fact that there are many different approaches and methods in language teaching, no single method is suitable for all situations. The fact that some approaches work better than others in particular settings suggests the need for more empirical investigation in conjunction with an integration of existing pedagogical approaches.

In their 2000 article, Norris and Ortega also brought to light serious flaws in many experimental research studies on the effectiveness of instruction. Many published studies have actually lacked adequate statistical data. Using the wrong type of measurement and providing unclear and incomplete statistical and/or experimental information decreases the reliability, validity, credibility, and value of the research. Clear and complete information is needed for future investigative replication.

Through their analysis, Norris and Ortega (2000) link theory and practice, providing much-needed guidance for language researchers and language teachers.

REFERENCES

Norris, J. M., & Ortega, L. (2000). Effectiveness of L2 instruction: A research synthesis and quantitative meta-analysis. *Language Learning*, 50, 417-528.

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