

Norris, J. & Ortega, L. “Effectiveness of L2 Instruction: A Research Synthesis and Quantitative Meta-analysis,” *Language Learning* 50:3, September 2000, pp. 417-528.

Betty’s comments:

The conclusions in this important article validate what those of us who teach grammar have observed for ourselves: teaching grammar works. This article is a research summary of

“... investigations into the effectiveness of L2 instruction published between 1980 and 1998... [and concludes according to the data] that focused L2 instruction results in large target-oriented gains, that explicit types of instruction are more effective than implicit types, and that Focus on Form and Focus on FormS interventions result in equivalent and large effects.”

In other words, in this meta-analysis of research that had been conducted over the course of 18 years, the conclusion is that the explicit teaching of grammar (which includes both inductive and deductive strategies) is more effective than implicit approaches (which include only communicative exposure to target structures).

This excerpt also discusses the two major approaches to including a grammar component in an instructional program.

Focus on Form essentially means slotting in grammar to content-based, task-based, skill-based communicative teaching, with the grammar designed to help students perform the activity at hand. There is a wide variety of ways to do that, including either reactively or proactively, or both. The goal is developing all usage skills.

Focus on FormS (which I call [*Grammar-Based Teaching*](#)) essentially refers to working from a structural syllabus and weaving in content-based, task-based, skill-based communicative activities designed to give a lot of exposure to target structures and opportunities to practice using them. The goal is developing all usage skills.

These two basic approaches to including grammar are, Norris and Ortega say, equally effective, so the choice of one over the other would depend on the teaching situation. But to choose not to include any L2 grammar instruction at all would be to ignore what a preponderance of research in the last 25 or 30 years has shown about the effectiveness of a grammar component in a balanced program of second language instruction.

Any thoughts? Let us hear from you on [Teacher Talk](#).