

Dissertation Title:

Constructing knowledge in SLA:
The role of timing of form-focused intervention

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Summary:

In an effort to identify an optimal timing for form-oriented treatment, this dissertation reports on the impact of different timings of form-focused intervention. Applying the theories of attentional control (Cowan, *et al.*, 2005; LaBerge, 1995), the study further attempts to shed light on the role of preparatory attentional control at the initial stage of form-encoding.

A reading task served as a framework for exploring different timings of treatment with 58 EFL students in Japan. The informants were classified into three groups: one group receiving explicit treatment before the task, another during, and a control group receiving no treatment. Participants took pretests and posttests immediately before and after the task in a single class session. These tests examined comprehension of two epistemic meanings of ‘must’ in two individual forms. Working with these task-essential forms, each informant recorded real-time reflections reporting rationales for their selections from different form options in the task. The participants’ rationales revealed that contextualized reflections are strongly associated with higher accuracy levels in choosing between alternate forms. Decontextualized rationales were associated with incorrect selections of forms at a high level of probability. Group difference was highly significant for one form and significant for the other form in the order of Control < Pre-emptive < Delayed group. Effect sizes were large (e.g. 2.00) for the delayed group which outperformed the pre-emptive group. The pattern of the results replicated three prior studies with 286 participants.

The overall results present a promising role for delayed treatment reactive to raised preparatory attention. The outcome further confirms that it is through making connections between form and meaning within current language use that learners become successful in language comprehension.

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