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EVALUATING THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF STRUCTURED-INPUT AND OUTPUT-BASED INSTRUCTION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Results from an Experimental Study

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This paper reviews studies that have contrasted the effectiveness of structured-input instruction with output-based instruction. It then presents results from a study comparing the relative effects of structured-input and output-based instruction on students' ability to comprehend and produce direct object pronouns in second language French. Three classes of students ($N = 70$) were assigned to three groups: structured-input instruction, output-based instruction, and control. Students were assessed on listening comprehension, reading comprehension, written production, and oral production tasks. All but one of these language measures required a pressured response. Overall, the results showed greater gains for the output-based instruction group.

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The model of language acquisition that informs mainstream SLA identifies three main processes: intake, acquisition, and language production (Ellis, 2001). Traditionally, language instruction has been aimed at the last of these processes—that is, teachers combine some sort of explicit grammar instruction with activities that concentrate on providing learners with opportunities to produce the target structure. VanPatten and Cadierno (1993b), however, argued that instead of trying to change how learners produce language output, instruction should focus on altering how learners process input. Instruction that changes the way input is perceived and processed by the learner is more likely to become intake and thus have an impact on the developing language system. There is now a substantial body of research that has contrasted the effectiveness of having students work with language input to having them produce language output.

INPUT-BASED INSTRUCTION

The idea that having students work with language input should precede production is not new. An early form of input-based instruction was described by Asher (1981) and Winitz (1981) as *comprehension training*. They recommended the delay of oral practice in foreign language teaching until the "clinician" (Winitz, p. 102) is convinced that the structures being taught are fully understood without contextual assistance. Any investigation, however, of the success of these input-based instructional techniques was done in the context of global method studies. The present discussion focuses on more recent research in input-based instructional techniques that has investigated the acquisition of specific language structures.

Several input-based instructional techniques have been the focus of recent SLA research. For example, enriched-input instructional techniques (also referred to as *input flooding*, by Trahey, 1996, and Trahey & White, 1993) expose students to input that has been seeded with examples of the target structure (Ellis, 1993; Robinson, 1996). Enhanced-input instructional techniques, on the other hand, expose students to input in which the target structure is typographically enhanced (Alanen, 1995; Doughty, 1991; Leeman, Arteagoitia, Fridman, & Doughty, 1995). Both of these instructional techniques are forms of implicit language instruction in that they involve neither rule presentation nor direction to attend to particular language forms (Norris & Ortega, 2000). In terms of explicit input-based instruction, two types can be identified: input-processing instruction and structured-input instruction.

Input-processing and structured-input instruction have not always been clearly differentiated. This is because some studies have been designed as input processing studies (DeKeyser & Sokalski, 1996; Salaberry, 1997) but are more appropriately defined as structured-input studies because they do not make any mention of altering an unhelpful, natural-processing strategy (VanPatten, 2002).[1] Another likely reason for the fact that research informed by these two theoretical positions is often not clearly differentiated is that Van-

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Patten uses the term *structured-input activities* to refer to the input-based activities that he gives to students in his processing-instruction treatments. This may lead to the misunderstanding that structured-input activities are synonymous with input-processing instruction. This paper focuses more specifically on research that has investigated the effectiveness of structured-input instruction.

STRUCTURED-INPUT INSTRUCTION

In structured-input instruction, students are required to work with language input that focuses their attention on a particular target structure. They are given listening or reading tasks that require them to pay attention to the form of the target structure and process its meaning. They are not at any stage engaged in activities requiring them to produce this structure. A crucial aspect of this instructional approach is that it involves a primary focus on form (Ellis, 2001).

There are now a number of studies that have contrasted the effectiveness of activities designed to encourage students to pay attention to form and process input for meaning with output-based activities. This research has perhaps been inspired by results from global method studies investigating the effectiveness of comprehension-based approaches (e.g., Asher, Kusudo, & de la Torre, 1974) and by results from input processing research (e.g., VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993a, 1993b). These studies found that students who had worked on input-based activities performed better on comprehension tasks and, more surprisingly, performed as well on production tests as those who had worked on output-based activities.

Details of studies that have contrasted structured-input and output-based instruction are presented in Table 1. These studies differ in how they operationalized output-based instructional treatments—that is, the instructional treatment option that was contrasted with structured-input instruction. Some studies (Nagata, 1998; Tanaka, 2001) compared structured-input instruction with meaning-focused, output-based instruction. Other studies (Hazzard, 1999; Kim, 2001; Toth, 1997) compared structured-input instruction with a more traditional form of output-based instruction; students engaged in some mechanical language practice as well as more meaningful language activities. One study (Tanaka, 1996) did not require students in the output-based instruction group to focus on meaning at all. DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996) included some mechanical practice in the instructional treatment given to their structured-input group as well as in the instructional treatment given to the output-based instruction group. Therefore, in their study also, each group received an equal focus on meaning. Salaberry (1997) did not provide enough information to enable classification. Only two studies (Tanaka, 2001; Toth) provided any definition of what was meant by meaningful or mechanical activities, and no study gave details as to what proportion of the treatment session was spent on mechanical as opposed to meaningful activities. The classification of treatments

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Table 1. Summary of research that investigates the effectiveness of structured-input instruction, 1996–2001

Study	*N*	Instruction type contrasted with structured input	Target structure	Mechanical practice	Each posttest	Tests of tasks	Results
Dekeyser & Sokalski, 1996	36 and 46	Output and control	Spanish clitic direct object pronouns and conditional	Some for both input and output groups	0 days 1 week	Comprehension and production	Direct object pronouns: no significant difference between groups for either task. Conditional: no significant difference.
Tanaka, 1996	90	Output and interaction-based	English relative clause	Limited to output group	5 days 8 weeks	Listening comprehension and written production	Greater gains for input group on listening test.
Salaberry, 1997	26	Output and control	Spanish clitic direct object pronouns	Not described	1 day 4 weeks	Written comprehension, production, and free narrative	Comprehension: gains for both input and output groups. Production: no significant gains.
Toth, 1997	91	Task-based and output	Spanish morpheme *se*	Limited to output group	0 days 24 days	Written-guided production, free production, and grammaticality judgment	Slight advantage for output group on free production test.

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Nagata, 1998	14	Computer-based input vs. output	Japanese honorific system	No	2 days 4 weeks 5 weeks	Interpretation, written production, and oral production (posttest 3 only)	Greater gains for output group on production tests.
Hazzard, 1999	54	Output and control	Spanish verbs, *ser* and *estar* "to be"	Some for output group	2 weeks 6 weeks	Interpretation, written production, and unplanned oral production	Greater gains for input and control groups on written production tests.
Kim, 2001	87	Output and control	English relative clauses	Some for output group	6 days 2 weeks	Timed listening comprehension, reading, and written production (timed and untimed)	Greater gains for output group on timed production posttest 2.
Tanaka, 2001	65	Output, combined input-output, and control	English psychological verbs	No	1 week 4 weeks	Aural interpretation and verbal production	Combined and output groups made greater gains than input on production tests.

as meaning-focused is therefore dependent to some extent on the way that individual researchers have interpreted this term. For this study, I will define *mechanical* and *meaningful activities* according to Lee and VanPatten (1995). Mechanical activities are those that students can complete without attending to meaning and for which there is only one correct answer, as in (1).

(1) Fill in the gap in the following sentences.
a. *Voilà l'autobus. Vous devez ____ prendre pour aller en ville.*
"There's the bus. You need to take it to get into town."
b. *Où est le guide Michelin? Je veux ____ lire.*
"Where is the Michelin guide? I want to read it."

Meaningful activities, on the other hand, can only be successfully completed when the meaning of both the stimulus and the response are attended to, as in (2).

(2) Answer the following questions to see if you are a good student or not. Use direct object pronouns to replace the underlined nouns.
Est-ce que tu fais toujours tes devoirs?
"Do you always do your homework?"
The student formulates an answer, such as:
Oui, je les fais tous les soirs.
"Yes, I always do it every evening."

These differences in the way that output-based instruction is conceptualized and operationalized may be crucial in explaining the results obtained.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the results of studies that have contrasted structured-input and output-based instruction.

1. All studies provided evidence that students who have had structured-input instruction perform as well on comprehension and interpretation tasks as those who have had output-based instruction.
2. Only one study reported a superior effect for structured-input instruction on comprehension tasks (Tanaka, 1996). It is important to note that the instruction that students in the output-based instruction group received in this study did not require them to focus on meaning at all.
3. Four studies (DeKeyser & Sokalski, 1996; Hazzard, 1999; Tanaka, 1996; Toth, 1997) reported equivalent gains for both structured-input and output-based instruction groups on production tasks. (Hazzard reported equivalent gains for both groups on an oral production task but greater gains for the structured-input group on a written production task.) It is interesting to note that, in all of these studies in which there were equivalent gains for both groups on production tasks, structured-input instruction was contrasted with output-based instruction that included mechanical practice and was not consistently meaning focused. Three studies (Kim, 2001; Nagata, 1998; Tanaka, 2001) reported greater gains for the output-based instruction group on production tasks. In Nagata and in Tanaka (2001), the output-based instructional treatments were meaning focused.
4. In those studies in which there was an advantage for the output-based instruction

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group on tests of production, the advantage tended to be evidenced on tests that required a pressured response—that is, timed production tests (Kim; Tanaka, 2001). Toth also reported a slight advantage for the output-based instruction group on a test of free oral production.

The results from structured-input instruction research to date suggest that it is crucial to consider what structured-input instruction is opposed to. There is evidence to suggest that structured-input instruction may not be superior to meaning-oriented, output-based instruction. There is also evidence to suggest that the advantage for output-based instruction may be greater on tests of language production that require a pressured or unplanned response. The present study was designed to further investigate the effectiveness of structured-input instruction in relation to output-based instruction when the latter is meaning oriented, and the effects of the instruction are measured by a battery of tests that included time-pressured instruments.

THE PRESENT STUDY

This study investigated the relative effects of structured-input instruction and output-based instruction on the acquisition of direct object pronouns in French (excluding *en* and reflexives). It was conducted with school-age learners, in contrast to the majority of previous structured-input studies (six out of nine) that were conducted with university students. All but one of the language measures required a pressured response. The research questions for the study were the following.

1. Do structured-input instruction and output-based instruction lead to greater gains on tests of comprehension and production than those evidenced by the control group?
2. Does structured-input instruction enable L2 learners to comprehend the target structure more effectively than meaning-oriented, output-based instruction?
3. Does structured-input instruction enable second language (L2) learners to produce the target structure as effectively as meaning-oriented, output-based instruction?

Subjects

The study was conducted in one of New Zealand's largest secondary schools during the last school term of 2000. Three classes of fourth-form students (approximately 14 years of age) were involved in the study. To establish whether there was any overall difference in ability between the classes, students' scores (available for 66 of the 70 students) were compared on a Test of Scholastic Abilities (Reid, Jackson, Gilmore, & Croft, 1981), administered prior to their entry into the school and designed to give an indication, using a 9-point scale, of their ability to cope with the abstract manipulation of verbal and nu-

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merical symbols. A one-way ANOVA failed to find a significant difference among the three groups on this test, $F(3, 63) = 1.246$, $p = .301$.

Each class included some students whose native language (L1) was a language other than English, although all such students reported that they had been living in New Zealand for a period of more than 2 years. The level of English of these students was sufficient for them to be exempted from additional ESOL classes, which meant that they had time in their schedules for an optional subject such as French. Among those who reported that their L1 was not English, there were five students in group 1 (structured-input instruction), six students in group 2 (output-based instruction), and three students in group 3 (control).

The teaching approach adopted by the school's languages department places an emphasis on developing communicative skills in French although there is also considerable focus on forms. Classes meet 5 days a week for a 45-minute lesson. For the purposes of the study, classes were randomly assigned to one of the two treatment options (structured-input or output-based instruction) or to the control-group option. A total of 70 students (those who had attended all treatment and testing sessions) were included in the final analyses. Group 1 (structured-input) consisted of 23 students, group 2 (output-based instruction) consisted of 21 students, and group 3 (control) consisted of 26 students.

Research Method

Prior to the study, the students had not received any classroom instruction on direct object pronouns although they may well have come across them incidentally. For the purposes of the study, they were introduced to the target structure earlier than scheduled in the syllabus plan. Normally, they would not be given instruction in direct object pronouns until their third year of French. During the period of this study, they received no instruction on the target structure other than that given during the instructional treatments.

Target Structure

Ellis (1995) claimed that language forms that are already known but to which another, as yet unknown, meaning is to be assigned will be more learnable than entirely new language forms. Students in the present study were already familiar with the linguistic forms that realize direct object pronouns—that is, they had previously been taught these linguistic forms in lessons dealing with other grammatical functions (i.e., *nous* and *vous* as subject pronouns; *me*, *te*, *nous*, and *vous* as reflexive pronouns; and *le*, *la*, and *les* as definite articles). Mastery of direct object pronouns required them to assign another meaning to these already familiar forms.

Direct object pronouns present a number of difficulties for L2 learners of

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French. They require the learner to make a number of morphosemantic distinctions, such as gender, person, and number. Felix and Hahn (1985) reported that students master the pronominal system by acquiring these morphosemantic features one at a time. This, they claimed, parallels naturalistic language acquisition, which is characterized by the learner's successive acquisition of individual structural features and the reintegration of those features toward target-structure norms.

Several studies (Gundel & Tarone, 1992; Towell & Hawkins, 1994) have identified three stages that learners pass through in the placement of direct object pronouns: after the verb (e.g., **J'ai reconnu le* "I recognized him"), omission of the pronoun (e.g., *J'ai reconnu*), and between the auxiliary verb and the past participle (e.g., **J'ai le reconnu*).[2] Learners may initially assume that direct object pronouns are postverbal as in English (i.e., the L1 of the majority of students in this study). The fact that full object nouns are placed after the verb (e.g., *J'ai reconnu Mary* "I recognized Mary"), as are object pronouns with affirmative commands (e.g., *Faîtes-le* "Do it"), is further evidence to reinforce this assumption. As learners progress in their acquisition, however, they realize that the object pronoun is not postverbal, but they mistakenly assume that null objects are permissible (i.e., that the object may be omitted). VanPatten (1996) suggested that such an error could be attributable to input that contains weak and nonsalient object pronouns; in spoken French the schwa vowel of the object pronouns (*me*, *te*, and *le*) may be weakened to the extent that it is almost imperceptible. In written input, the preverbal object pronoun, which in French is placed medially in the sentence, may be dismissed as a structure that appears to have little communicative value. It would seem then that object pronouns lend themselves especially well to form-focused instruction because an attempt to make these forms more salient is likely to induce learners to attend to them even though they occur medially.

Instructional Treatments

The experimental treatments for all groups consisted of three lessons, which lasted 45 minutes each and occurred over a 1-week period. All teaching sessions were conducted by the same instructor, who was also the researcher. The structured-input group received explicit instruction regarding the key grammatical items (e.g., direct object noun and direct object pronoun). Students were then given a series of sentences and asked to identify the direct object pronoun in each one. The placement of the direct object pronoun within the sentence was explained to them. They then received explicit instruction regarding one of the morphological features of direct object pronouns (i.e., person, number, or gender) and worked at sequenced, input-based activities (VanPatten, 1996) that allowed practice of this particular feature. These activities were modeled on those used by VanPatten and Cadierno (1993a) and sequenced as follows.

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1. Students were given handouts that contained a series of pictures. Under each picture were two written statements. They had to choose which statement contained the pronoun form that corresponded to the picture.
2. Students were shown a series of pictures, one at a time, on the overhead projector. Once again they had to decide which of two statements (presented orally) corresponded to the picture.
3. Students were given short reading-comprehension passages and asked to circle the correct (direct object pronoun) referents from a choice of options.
4. Students also worked at an affectively oriented activity that required them to make a personal response. They had to read statements that contained the same kind of referents and decide whether they were true for them. For example, *Le professeur: je l'écoute toujours en classe* (*oui*/*non*) "The teacher: I always listen to him/her in class (yes/no)."
5. Students were given a series of consciousness-raising exercises in which they had to identify errors in written and then spoken input (as recommended by Ellis, 1995). These exercises required them to decide whether a given pronoun form was correct for a particular context and whether it was correctly placed in the sentence. They were encouraged to explain the reason why a particular usage was nontargetlike. Correct answers were given and explained to the students, but the production of direct object pronouns was not elicited.

For the morphological distinction of person, students worked on activities designed as described in 1 and 2, and for the morphological distinction of number and gender, they worked on activities as described in 1–3. Activities 4 and 5 enabled them to work on all of the morphological distinctions of direct object pronouns. For all of these activities, only nonverbal answers were elicited (i.e., students were encouraged to refer to choices in terms of option [a] or [b]), and feedback was given. (See Appendix for examples of activities.)

The model of teaching for the output-based instruction group fits loosely with what DeKeyser (1998) described as "cognitive code," in which explicit instruction is followed by form-focused activities that allow students time to think and apply rules they have learned. The students in this group also received explicit information regarding direct object pronouns. However, this time, the explicit information regarding the different morphological aspects of direct object pronouns was presented all at once. Furthermore, the placement of direct object pronouns was explained to the students.

Students then worked at a number of activities, which, unlike those given to the structured-input group, did not allow for practice of the different morphological aspects of direct object pronouns one at a time. In some activities they were given sentences in which direct object nouns were underlined. They were instructed to rewrite the sentences, replacing the direct object noun with the correct pronoun form. Students were also given written, gap-fill activities in which they had to choose the pronoun that corresponded to a previously mentioned noun and place it in the gap. Other activities were designed to give them oral practice of direct object pronouns; one was completed chorally with the researcher, and the others were done in pairs. For

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the purposes of this study, oral pair work was kept to a minimum to reduce the possibility that students gained input from listening to each other's attempts to produce the target structure. Thus, a greater emphasis was placed on individual written activities. (See Appendix for examples of activities.)

Although this group work was intended to focus only on meaningful activities, it was later discovered that two activities were mechanical, as defined by Lee and VanPatten (1995), in that the students did not need to attend to meaning and there was only one correct response. These two activities took a total of 22 minutes for students to complete, constituting a small proportion (16%) of the total instructional time. While completing these activities, students were encouraged to refer to a grid of direct object pronouns that was displayed on the overhead projector. On completion of each exercise the researcher either gave correct answers and explained her choice of pronoun or elicited answers from the students, explaining and correcting any errors that arose.

The control group also had three lessons scheduled with the researcher but were unaware that they were receiving instructional treatment that differed with respect to the target structure from that given to the other two classes. They thus received no exposure to the target structure outside the testing episodes.

Testing

A pretest was administered prior to a 2-week holiday break. The instructional treatments commenced the first week after the break, and posttest 1 was completed the following week. Posttest 2 was completed in the sixth week following instruction. A split-block design was used in test administration. Three similar versions (A, B, and C) of each test were created, and during each testing session each group of students was split into three and received one of these three versions. By the end of posttest 2, all students had completed all three versions of each test type. All tests took place during scheduled class hours.

Listening Comprehension Tests. The listening comprehension tests consisted of 12 items, 2 of which were distractors. They were timed to require the students to process language in real time. The students had 2 seconds to view a picture, after which they heard four sentences read at a slightly slower than normal rate by a native French speaker. They had another 2 seconds to decide which sentence accurately described the picture, after which the picture was removed. A tape recording was used for the administration of all listening tests. The sentences were chosen to include options that were (a) grammatically incorrect, (b) grammatically correct and accurate in describing the picture, and (c) grammatically correct but inaccurate in describing the picture. The correct choice in each case was a grammatically correct and accurate description of the picture. Students could score up to a maximum of 10 points.

Reading Comprehension Tests. The reading comprehension tests consisted of a short text written in French, which was controlled for vocabulary

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(i.e., a small number of unfamiliar words were glossed in the margin) and contained examples of direct object pronouns. The students were asked to answer 10 multiple-choice questions, 8 of which were designed to test whether they understood the pronoun referents (2 questions were distractors). They had to choose one out of four possible answers and were given one point for each correct answer, yielding a total of eight points.

Written Production Tests. Students were shown statements and questions with direct object nouns underlined on an overhead transparency. They were told to rewrite the statements and respond to the questions according to the prompts, replacing the underlined words with a pronoun. Before commencing the test, they were shown a correctly completed example. A time limit was set at 12 seconds to view each statement and question and another 10 seconds to complete each response, during which time the statement and question were removed. A prerecorded tape gave time signals to indicate when the visual stimulus was to be presented on the overhead and when it was to be removed. The test comprised 12 items, including 2 distractors. All versions of the test were carefully controlled to ensure that they elicited a similar number of direct object pronouns that varied with respect to gender, number, and person and that the pronouns occurred in an equivalent number of varying contexts (e.g., with an infinitive or in a negative sentence). Although the time pressure was originally designed to reduce the likelihood that students were monitoring their language performance, it became evident that it was not sufficient in all cases to preclude this. In a test of written production it seems difficult to establish a time frame that would allow all students sufficient time to write answers and no opportunity to monitor responses.

Each test was graded to give two scores: one that reflected mastery of pronoun forms and one for mastery of pronoun placement. Students were given one point for each attempted pronoun form and one point for each correct form, yielding a maximum score of 20. For pronoun placement scoring, students were given one point for each attempted form and another point for each pronoun correctly placed (again the maximum score was 20).

Oral Production Tests. The oral production test involved narration of a story as indicated by a short sequence of pictures. To test for obligatory use of the target structure, each version was piloted on native French speakers. All versions of the test elicited a minimum of two direct object pronouns and an average of four or more. Any discrepancy between different versions of the test was controlled for in the split-block design.

The oral production test had a timing constraint in that students were allowed enough time to look through the sequence of pictures once only (in front of the examiner) before commencing the picture narration. They were moved along to the next picture if they showed a tendency to dwell on any given picture (by either giving unnecessary detail or being unable to give any information). Below each picture was written the verb required to describe the action depicted. The students were not given any information that would

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lead them to expect that this narration task was designed to test their ability to produce direct object pronouns. However, it was obvious from the way some of them approached the task that they understood this. Others seemed to treat the task as a more general measure of their communicative competence.

Students' scores on this test were excluded from the analyses if they failed to establish two possible occasions for pronoun use—that is, two or more referents to a previously mentioned noun. They were given a total of three scores: The first reflected attempted pronoun forms (there was no limit to this score), the second reflected the percentage of correct pronoun forms (of the total number attempted), and the third reflected the percentage of pronouns correctly placed (of the total number attempted). No student used a correct pronoun form or placed an attempted pronoun form correctly on the pretest.

The reading comprehension test was completed after the written production and listening comprehension tests to minimize the possibility that it would serve as input for these two tests. Oral production testing began the day following group administration of these three tests and was completed within the week. For this test, students were tested individually and audio recorded. A number of examiners (none of whom were teachers at the school) were involved in the administration of these testing procedures.

Test Reliability and Validity. Douglas (2001) reported that SLA researchers generally fail to discuss whether language measures used are reliable and valid for the purposes they were intended, and he stressed the need to address these issues. The measures used in this study were all designed to provide information about students' learning of direct object pronouns in L2 French. Accordingly, all test measures were trialed on two populations of students of French—one that had received explicit instruction in the target structure and one that had not. Significant differences between the performances of both groups for all tests were found: listening comprehension versions A, B, and C, $t(49) = -5.46$, $p < .001$, $t(39) = -4.07$, $p < .001$, and $t(48) = -3.37$, $p < .001$, respectively; reading comprehension versions A, B, and C, $t(75) = -5.43$, $p < .001$, $t(43) = -2.20$, $p < .05$, and $t(46) = -2.14$, $p < .05$, respectively; written production versions A, B, and C, $t(30) = 5.43$, $p < .001$, $t(30) = 4.98$, $p < .001$, and $t(30) = 4.42$, $p < .001$, respectively. These results are considered evidence of the validity of the tests. Reliability was estimated from the test scores of students in the structured-input instruction and output-based treatment options. The scores of the students in the control group were not included because it was expected that there would be very little variability in their scores.

Test scores for versions A, B, and C were aggregated for each of the two comprehension tests. This decision was made because it is well known that reliability is a function of test length (Brown, 1996), and due to timing constraints individual versions of the tests contained relatively few test items. An internal-consistency method was used, and Cronbach's alpha was chosen. The reliability estimate for the combined listening comprehension test (30 items)

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Table 2. Reliability measures and standard deviations of language tests

Test	Cronbach's alpha	*M*	*SD*
Comprehension			
Listening	.4318	10.23	3.133
Reading	.6540	10.81	3.674
Written production			
Version A	.8962	8.2791	7.1191
Version B	.9070	8.4545	7.8665
Version C	.9457	7.4318	8.3091

was .4318, which is considered low. It is possible that students were guessing answers on this test because they were unable to make decisions about the language choices presented to them in real time. There was little variation in test scores. The results of the listening test have to be considered cautiously given this low reliability estimate. The reliability estimate for the combined reading comprehension test (24 items) was .6540, which is also low. The fact that there were fewer items and low variability in test scores may explain this.

In contrast, reliability estimates for each of the written production tests were high, as shown in Table 2. The greater reliability of the written production tests can perhaps be explained in part by the greater number of items and the greater variability in test scores. As Brown (1996) claimed, a test that is administered to a group of students with a wide range of abilities tends to be more reliable than one administered to a group with a narrow range of abilities. Table 2 also shows that those tests with higher standard deviations had greater reliability estimates. Correlation coefficients were calculated to give an estimate of interrater reliability of scoring for pronoun use, form, and placement in the oral production tests. High correlations suggest a high level of interrater reliability. The results (with $p < .01$) are as follows: pronoun frequency, $r = .989$; pronoun form, $r = .968$; and pronoun placement, $r = .958$.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each test, and raw scores from all tests across all testing sessions were submitted to a one-way ANOVA to determine what effect there might be for treatment (structured-input, output-based instruction, and control). The significance level was set at .05 for all statistical tests. ANOVAs performed on pretest scores revealed no significant differences among the groups before treatment, which shows that any differences among groups on posttests are not due to prior knowledge of the structure. Descriptive statistics for the listening comprehension tests are reported in Table 3. Results of the ANOVA conducted on posttest 1 scores revealed a significant difference in how the three groups performed on this test: pretest, $F(2, 69) =$

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Table 3. Descriptive statistics for listening comprehension tests

	Input ($n = 23$)		Output ($n = 21$)		Control ($n = 26$)	
Test	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	2.65	1.23	2.86	1.88	3.08	1.72
Posttest 1	3.17	1.40	4.76	2.19	2.92	1.23
Posttest 2	3.43	2.35	3.67	1.83	2.73	1.48

Note. Maximum score = 10. For input, $d = 0.28$, and for output, $d = 0.84$.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for reading comprehension tests

	Input ($n = 23$)		Output ($n = 21$)		Control ($n = 26$)	
Test	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	2.74	1.60	3.43	1.54	3.58	1.45
Posttest 1	3.83	1.37	4.19	1.80	3.08	1.57
Posttest 2	3.74	1.76	3.76	1.64	3.58	1.21

Note. Maximum score = 8. For input, $d = 0.30$, and for output, $d = 0.40$.

0.416, $p = .661$; posttest 1, $F(2, 69) = 8.389$, $p < .001$; posttest 2, $F(2, 69) = 1.574$, $p = .215$. Post hoc analyses revealed that the output group performed significantly better than both the structured-input and control groups.[3] On posttest 2, however, no significant difference was found among the three groups. It is interesting to note, nonetheless, that, whereas both treatment groups made gains on both posttests, the control group made a negative gain. Effect sizes for the two experimental groups, calculated using Cohen's *d*-index, are also reported. As described by Norris and Ortega (2000), *d* was calculated by contrasting the two experimental groups with the control group on posttests 1 and 2. The two contrasts thus obtained for each group were averaged to produce a single size estimate for each group on each test.

The results of the reading comprehension tests are presented in Table 4. Results of the ANOVA conducted on posttest 1 scores revealed a marginally significant difference in how the three groups performed on this test: pretest, $F(2, 69) = 2.03$, $p = .139$; posttest 1, $F(2, 69) = 3.06$, $p = .053$; posttest 2, $F(2, 69) = 0.105$, $p = .901$. Post hoc analyses found that the output group performed significantly better than the control group. On posttest 2, however, the three groups did not differ significantly. Both treatment groups made small but nonsignificant gains, whereas the control group made no gains.

The written production tests were scored to give separate sets of informa-

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Table 5. Descriptive statistics for written production tests scored for pronoun form

	Input ($n = 23$)		Output ($n = 21$)		Control ($n = 26$)	
Test	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	1.96	1.47	2.81	2.66	1.73	2.39
Posttest 1	9.78	4.84	11.57	4.64	3.88	3.08
Posttest 2	7.30	5.29	9.52	5.61	4.92	3.77

Note. Maximum score = 20. For input, $d = 1.02$, and for output, $d = 1.52$.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for written production tests scored for pronoun placement

	Input ($n = 23$)		Output ($n = 21$)		Control ($n = 26$)	
Test	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	2.00	1.65	3.00	2.85	1.73	2.34
Posttest 1	8.61	3.94	11.29	4.81	3.85	2.57
Posttest 2	6.74	4.89	8.81	5.65	4.62	3.13

Note. Maximum score = 20. For input, $d = 0.54$, and for output, $d = 0.99$.

tion about acquisition of pronoun form and placement. Results given in Table 5 reflect scores for the target form. The ANOVA revealed a significant difference in how all three groups performed on both posttests under this scoring condition: pretest, $F(2, 69) = 1.47$, $p = .237$; posttest 1, $F(2, 69) = 22.08$, $p < .0001$; posttest 2, $F(2, 69) = 5.183$, $p < .01$. Post hoc analyses revealed that the structured-input group and the output group both performed significantly better than the control group on posttest 1. On posttest 2, the output group, but not the structured-input group, again performed significantly better than the control group.[4]

Results of scoring for pronoun placement are presented in Table 6. Once again, there was a significant difference in how the three groups performed on both posttests: pretest, $F(2, 69) = 1.874$, $p = .162$; posttest 1, $F(2, 69) = 23.330$, $p < .0001$; posttest 2, $F(2, 69) = 4.879$, $p < .05$. On posttest 1, post hoc analyses revealed that the output group performed significantly better than both the structured-input and control groups, and the structured-input group performed significantly better than the control group. There was, however, no significant difference between the structured-input and output groups on posttest 2 or between the structured-input and control groups. Once again, the output group performed significantly better than the control group on this test.

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Table 7. Descriptive statistics for oral production tasks scored to indicate incidence of pronoun use

	Input (n = 19)		Output (n = 19)		Control (n = 22)	
Test	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	0.53	1.47	0.74	1.91	0.09	0.43
Posttest 1	1.32	2.11	1.74	2.86	0.14	0.64
Posttest 2	0.74	1.56	1.74	2.08	1.14	2.40

Note. For input, $d = 0.35$, and for output, $d = 0.61$. Some students had to be deleted from the oral pretesting either because they were not recorded due to technical error or because they failed to establish two possible cases for direct object occurrence.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics (percentages) for oral production tests scored for pronoun form

	Input (n = 19)		Output (n = 19)		Control (n = 22)	
Test	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Posttest 1	10.53	26.77	20.84	36.06	0.00	0.00
Posttest 2	5.26	22.94	17.11	35.41	0.00	0.00

Note. For input, $d = 0.67$, and for output, $d = 1.15$.

The results of the oral production tests scored for pronoun use are displayed in Table 7. There is no ceiling for these scores. The ANOVA revealed a significant difference between the performance of the groups on posttest 1 only: pretest, $F(2, 59) = 1.183$, $p = .314$; posttest 1, $F(2, 59) = 3.449$, $p < .05$; posttest 2, $F(2, 59) = 1.136$, $p = .328$. Post hoc analyses revealed that the output group attempted significantly more pronoun forms than the control group. There was no significant difference in the performance of all groups on posttest 2. However, it is interesting to note the scores of the control group on this test. It appears that students in this group had become increasingly aware through their exposure to the structure in testing sessions that a direct object noun could be replaced by a pronoun form. Although no student in this group used a correct target form or placed an attempted target form correctly in any of these tests, these students did attempt more pronoun forms on posttest 2.

For the oral production tests (as in the written production tests), students were given scores that reflected mastery of both the morphological and syntactic features of the target structure. Pretest scores demonstrate that no student was able to use a correct target form or correctly place an attempted target form. Table 8 presents the results for pronoun form. To obtain these

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Table 9. Descriptive statistics (percentages) for oral production tests scored for pronoun placement

	Input ($n = 19$)		Output ($n = 19$)		Control ($n = 22$)	
Test	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pretest	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Posttest 1	14.47	30.41	31.58	44.75	0.00	0.00
Posttest 2	5.26	22.94	23.68	42.06	0.00	0.00

Note. For input, $d = 0.76$, and for output, $d = 1.37$.

scores, the total number of correct target forms was divided by the total number of instances of pronoun use (or by two if the student attempted only one pronoun form).[5] The result obtained was converted into a percentage. As ANOVA was not appropriate for making comparisons on the pretest or with the control group, given that these scores exhibit zero variance, independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare the performance of the structured-input and output groups on both posttests. There was no significant difference between these two groups: posttest 1, $t(36) = -1.00$, $p = .323$; posttest 2, $t(36) = -1.22$, $p = .229$.

Table 9 presents the results for pronoun placement in the oral tests. The procedure for scoring the oral production of pronoun form (Table 8) was also used to obtain these figures for pronoun placement. *T*-tests were conducted on the scores on the structured-input and output groups on both posttests. No significant differences were observed: posttest 1, $t(36) = -1.378$, $p = .177$; posttest 2, $t(36) = -1.676$, $p = .102$.

DISCUSSION

Research question 1 asked whether structured-input and output-based instruction led to greater gains on tests of comprehension and production than those evidenced by the control group. The answer to this question is yes. As previously described, effect sizes were calculated by contrasting the two experimental groups with the control group on posttests 1 and 2. The two experimental groups made gains when compared to the control group on all tests. Ten out of the 14 effect sizes that were calculated can be classified as either large ($d > 0.80$) or medium ($0.50 < d < 0.80$), according to Cohen (1988). The gains that both experimental groups made on all language measures demonstrate the effectiveness of form-focused instruction in teaching a grammatical structure such as direct object pronouns in L2 French.

Research question 2 asked whether structured-input instruction enabled L2 learners to comprehend the target structure more effectively than meaning-oriented, output-based instruction. The answer to this question is no. In fact,

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results show that the output group performed better than the structured-input group on both comprehension tests, although there was some evidence to suggest greater gains over time for the structured-input group. There was little difference between the averaged effect sizes of posttests 1 and 2 for both groups on the reading comprehension tests, and both were small ($0.20 < d < 0.50$). A careful examination of the means for each group (in Table 4), however, shows that the output group's initial gains were not sustained in posttest 2, whereas the gains made by the structured-input group were maintained over time. Tanaka (1996) also found that students who received structured-input instruction maintained gains on comprehension tests to a greater extent than those given output-based instruction.

On the listening comprehension tests, the effect size for the output group was large ($d = 0.84$), whereas that of the structured-input group was small ($d = 0.28$). This is an interesting result that contrasts with those of other studies; in no other study was the effect of the output-based instruction group greater than that of the structured-input group on measures of interpretation and comprehension. The difference in results, at least for the listening comprehension tests, may perhaps be explained by a key difference in test design—that is, students were required to process language in real time—although the low reliability estimates on this test suggest that any conclusions must be tentative. Only one other study (Kim, 2001) has used a measure of comprehension that involved a time restriction. Kim found, however, that both structured-input and output-based instruction groups performed similarly on this test.

Research question 3 asked whether structured-input instruction enabled L2 learners to produce the target structure as effectively as meaning-oriented, output-based instruction. Again the answer to this question is no. The output group performed better than the structured-input group on all measures of production. The effect sizes for the structured-input group were either small or medium for all tests except the written production tests scored for pronoun form where the effect size was large ($d = 1.02$). In contrast, the effect sizes for the output group were large on all tests except the oral production tests scored for pronoun form ($d = 0.61$). However, it is important to note that, although students in the output group performed better overall than students in the structured-input group on all production tests, the latter, who did not engage in any activity requiring them to produce the target structure at any time during instructional treatments, performed nearly as well as the output group on the written production tests scored for pronoun form. These results underscore the importance of the role of input in language learning.

There are a number of reasons that could account for the relative effectiveness of the output-based instruction in this study. The first reason is that the majority of practice activities were designed to be meaningful. There is some evidence from previous structured-input research to support the hypothesis that the meaning-oriented nature of the majority of activities that the output-based instruction group engaged in could account for the results obtained in this study (Nagata, 1998; Tanaka, 2001). The second possible reason is that

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the instruction induced attention to form in the input that students received. Careful examination of the task requirements corresponding to activities used in the treatment groups suggests that the two different instructional treatments made the target structure equally salient. Students in the structured-input group were given activities in which they were required to pay attention to specific linguistic forms and the meanings they convey. Students in the output-based instruction group were given tasks in which they were required to choose an appropriate linguistic form (direct object pronoun) to replace an underlined direct object noun. They, too, (in the majority of tasks) had to focus on the meaning that these forms conveyed to correctly complete these tasks. Students in this instructional treatment option also received feedback on their performance. The effects of the feedback that gave them information about the impossibility of certain structures or word orders may not have been very dissimilar from the learning gained through consciousness-raising activities in the structured-input group. Both groups may have had the opportunity to notice the gap between targetlike and nontargetlike performance. It can be argued, then, that students in each instructional group were engaged in noticing and processing different linguistic structures for meaning. As Gass (1997) pointed out, if what stimulates the development of L2 competence is salience in the input that students receive, then "it matters little how salience comes about" (p. 129).

The third possible reason for the relative effectiveness of the output-based instruction in this study is that it aided automatic use of the target structure. This claim is based on results obtained from the tests that were designed to involve time pressure. On all of the tests that required students to make a response within a limited period of time, there were large effect sizes for the output-based instruction group. Results further indicate that the performance of the output-based instruction group relative to that of the structured-input group increased as time pressure increased, and the greater gains of the output-based group on the listening comprehension tests have previously been discussed. There was also a large effect size for the output-based instruction group on the oral production tests scored for pronoun form ($d = 1.15$) and a medium effect size for the structured-input group ($d = 0.67$), whereas the effect sizes for both groups on the written production tests scored for pronoun form were large ($d = 1.02$, $d = 1.52$). It can be assumed that the oral production tests exerted greater pressure on students, requiring unplanned responses that were not tightly prescribed as in the written production test. Given that the output-based instruction group (which had received instruction focusing almost exclusively on production practice) did better on tests designed to yield a measure of automaticity as well as accuracy of student responses, there may be some support for the theory that skills develop when they are practiced (DeKeyser & Sokalski, 1996).

Norris and Ortega (2000) claimed that there is a significant relationship between the observed effectiveness of L2 instruction and tests or measures used. Further research is needed to clarify to what extent the results obtained

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in this and other studies are a function of differences in test design. VanPatten (2002) suggested the need for research design that incorporates measures of speed along with those of accuracy to see whether students who engage in output gain more in fluency than those who do not. The results of this study tentatively support this theory. However, results on the oral production tests tend to indicate that, although output-based instruction was more effective than structured-input instruction in enabling students to develop automatic use of the target structure, neither type of instruction was particularly effective. The gains made on these tests were limited. For example, on posttests 2, students in the output-based instruction group attempted on average less than two pronoun forms ($M = 1.74$), and of these, only 24% were correct for the given context. Students in the structured-input group attempted on average less than one form ($M = 0.74$) on these tests, of which only 5% were correct. The fact that both groups made relatively small gains on the oral production test may be due to the limited duration (i.e., 135 minutes) of instructional treatments. These limited gains may also be a factor of time—that is, testing may have been conducted before students had the time they needed to develop automatic use of the target structure.

CONCLUSION

This study provides further evidence for the value of input-based instruction as an instructional method. This is an encouraging result for the designers of any language program that requires the learner to work autonomously and affords less opportunity for teacher or other-learner interaction (e.g., distance learning). Results suggest, however, that there is no greater advantage for structured-input instruction over meaning-oriented, output-based instruction. The overall greater gains made by the output-based group in this study suggest that the meaning-oriented nature of instruction may play a key role in SLA. There is also some evidence that output-based instruction may be more effective when language measures require a pressured response. More research, however, is needed to ascertain whether giving students opportunities to produce language leads to greater gains in automaticity and the development of oral skills.

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NOTES

1. In input-processing instruction, the language structure targeted is one that has been demonstrated to present input-processing instruction difficulties for students according to VanPatten's principles of input processing (VanPatten, 1996, 2002). In input-processing instructional treatments, students receive explicit information about this unhelpful processing strategy and work at input-based materials that help direct them away from it.

2. The students in the study had not had any formal instruction on the preterite tense, and direct object pronouns, therefore, were never presented to them in this context.

3. All post hoc testing was done using Fisher's LSD test. There was no concern over an escalated

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family-wise Type 1 error rate because of a significant ANOVA result and because there were only three groups (Howell, 1999, p. 321).

4. Although the structured-input group did perform better on this test than the control group (means of 7.3 and 4.92, respectively), the difference was not statistically significant ($p = .093$).

5. As all native French speakers used a minimum of two direct object pronouns when describing each of the three versions of the oral production test, it was decided that this would be used as a minimum, expected number of instances of pronoun use. It was also considered unadvisable to give a student, who had attempted only one pronoun, 100% for pronoun form, placement, or both solely on the basis of one correct example of usage.

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APPENDIX

EXAMPLES OF TEACHING MATERIALS USED

Structured-Input Instruction

Input-based activities (translations provided for the reader only).

(1) Students are shown a picture of a man frowning and talking sternly to a young boy who is looking up at him. They are asked to decide which of the following two sentences represents what the man may be saying.
a. *Ne te regarde pas comme ça*. "Don't look at yourself like that."
b. *Ne me regarde pas comme ça*. "Don't look at me like that."

(2) Students are shown a picture of a girl looking at a pile of presents on the table in front of her. They have to decide which of these two sentences best describes the picture.
a. *Elle veut l'ouvrir*. "She wants to open it."
b. *Elle veut les ouvrir*. "She wants to open them."

Error-correction exercise. Henri asks David some questions. But David has had a bit too much to drink! When he speaks French, he makes some mistakes. For each question that Henri asks below, listen to the answer that David gives, and decide whether it is grammatically correct or whether it contains an error.

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Henri: *David, est-ce que tu trouves le français facile?* "David, do you find French easy?"
David: *Non, je trouve le très difficile*. "No, I find it difficult."
Henri: *Alors, est-ce que tu trouves les examens difficiles?* "Do you find exams difficult then?"
David: *Ah oui, je les trouve très difficiles aussi*. "Oh yes, I also find them very difficult."

Output-Based Instruction

Oral activity. Your partner wants you to reassure them. What do you answer to the following questions?

Modéle: *Est-ce que tu m'adores?* "Do you love me?"
Oui, mon amour, je t'adore, or, *non, je ne t'adore pas*. "Yes, my darling, I love you," or "no, I don't love you."
1. *Est-ce que tu m'adores?* "Do you love me?"
2. *Est-ce que tu me trouves sexy?* "Do you think I am sexy?"
3. *Est-ce que tu vas m'aimer dans 20 ans?* "Will you still love me in 20 years' time?"

Written activity. Complete the following *sondage* "survey." Answer the questions that ask for your opinion about different things. To make it easy for yourself, instead of writing out the whole sentence, replace the underlined word with a pronoun. You can use the adjectives that are in the list to help you.

difficile "difficult"	*facile* "easy"	*cool* "cool"
ennuyeux(*se*) "boring"	*genial* "brilliant"	*fantastique* "fantastic"
délicieux "delicious"	*passionnant*(*e*) "exciting"	

1. *Comment trouves-tu* ___ *College*? "What do you think of ___ College?"
2. *Comment trouves-tu le français?* "What do you think of French?"
3. *Comment trouves-tu les examens?* "What do you think of exams?"
4. *Comment trouves-tu le rap?* "What do you think of rap?"

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