Traditional Instruction versus Processing Instruction in Dutch vocational L2 classrooms.

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In my presentation I will discuss an experiment in which two approaches to English grammar teaching were tested in Dutch vocational classrooms. After years of communicative language training in which grammar teaching was considered out of place and ineffective (Krashen, 1985; Ellis, 2006; Westhoff, 2011), grammar is back in Dutch classrooms and course books. It is therefore important to test various approaches to assess their effectiveness in practice. In this research which focused on the –ed past tense verb inflection we tested the effectiveness of Processing Instruction (PI), an approach in which learners are exposed to input with the target form, requiring them to make form – meaning connections. According to VanPatten (1993, 1996, 2004, 2007), Marsden & Chen (2011) and Angelovska & Benati (2013) language learners can make significant learning gains by means of PI. While most research into PI investigated university aged native speakers of English (Lee, 2013), this experiment was carried out in Dutch vocational classrooms. Findings of this research in which 230 young learners of English at five vocational schools took part, show that both the PI group and a control group made considerable learning gains on the productive tasks, while PI was more effective in the receptive tasks.

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