Editorial

Alessandro Benati and Elena Nuzzo

The 'Emerging methods and research in language sciences research cluster group', led by Alessandro Benati, organised a two-day symposium on 18–19 March 2020 at the American University of Sharjah (UAE).

The symposium, entitled 'Rethinking grammar instruction: the case for processing instruction', celebrated processing instruction as an effective pedagogical intervention in grammar instruction, facilitating the cognitive processes by which learners connect a form in the input to its meaning. The purpose of this symposium was twofold: (1) to present and discuss the results of current experimental research into the effects of processing instruction using online methods and tasks to measure correct language processing; (2) to highlight the main implications of this research for language teachers and teaching. The idea for this special issue on 'Processing instruction: new methods and research trends' evolved from the symposium, and all the plenary speakers have contributed to this volume. This special edition also acknowledges their ground-breaking work.

Alessandro Benati opens this special issue with a brief review of processing instruction and five recent studies measuring the effects of processing instruction using online measurements.

In the next contribution, James Lee and Stephen Doherty's empirical study adopts an online, process-oriented approach to examining accuracy across the time course of a pre-test/treatment/post-test processing instruction experiment. The aim of this study is to explore the emergence and development of accuracy over the time course of the experiment.

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Alessandro Benati's following study explores the effects of structured input and traditional instruction on the acquisition of English passive forms using online measurements (eye-tracking). A pre- and post-training design is adopted and participants are assessed by means of a picture selection eye-tracking task to measure accuracy and eye-movement patterns while they are processing auditory sentences. Results of the eye-tracking task indicate that the structured input group achieves significantly higher accuracy scores compared with the group receiving traditional instruction. The main findings from the present study reveal that structured input training brings about a change in learners' eye-movement patterns.

Tanja Angelovska and Dietmar Roehm present the results of a study on the possible effects of processing instruction on the acquisition of the English past simple *-ed* tense form by school-age learners. Based on accuracy scores and reaction time for the interpretation tasks and accuracy scores from a gap-filling task, this is the first study measuring instructional effects due to modality type.

Paul Malovrh, James Lee, Stephen Doherty and Alecia Nichols investigate the immediate and long-term effects of learning the Spanish true passive in a beginning-level foreign language course, using computer-assisted instructional delivery. In this study, they observe deductive versus guided-inductive approaches, in which depth of processing is measured by the level of involvement in grammatical rule formation and by response time in a self-paced reading, moving-window design.

Gaia Chiuchiù and Alessandro Benati then investigate the relative effects of structured input (the core component of processing instruction) and textual enhancement on the acquisition of Italian subjunctive of doubt forms. A pre-/post-test procedure is adopted in this study, using self-paced reading to measure changes in processing behaviours. The online measurements analysis provides important insights into the individual and instructional groups' processing behaviours, and has direct implications for teachers and teaching.

The book review of VanPatten, Smith and Benati's volume, *Key Questions in Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction*, closes the issue.

Each article in this special edition was first reviewed by the special issue editor, and the authors incorporated their comments and feedback. We then sent the works out for double-blind review. We would like to thank the reviewers for their time, insights and attention to detail. We would especially like to thank the contributors of this special issue for working assiduously to meet our deadlines and, more importantly, for the quality of the work they have produced.

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