Editorial

The focus of this special issue is instructed second language acquisition (ISLA). It is to explore some of the most recent developments in this area of SLA research and its implications for classroom instruction. Drawing on some current definitions (Leow, 2015; Loewen, 2015; Nassaji, 2015; Nassaji & Fotos, 2010), ISLA is defined as an area of SLA that investigates not only the effects but also the processes and mechanisms involved in any form-focused intervention (explicit or implicit) with the aim of facilitating language learning and development. Instructed SLA differs from naturalistic SLA, which refers to second language (L2) acquisition taking place through exposure to language in naturalistic language learning settings with no formal intervention (Doughty, 2003). It is also different from classroom instruction with no focus on form. Furthermore, although instructed SLA is often taken to refer to what is learned inside the classroom, instructed SLA can also take place outside the classroom through, for example, various instructional strategies (such as feedback, tasks, or explanation) that are often associated with instruction. Of course, this does not mean that the processes involved in SLA in and outside the classroom are exactly the same. Although there might be commonalities in learning processes, the classroom context has its unique features that might have an impact on learning. For example, in classroom learning a group of learners come together in a particular place to learn the language jointly during a given period of time. This might have an impact on learning opportunities in terms of the nature of the discourse created, learners' participation, interaction, and engagement with language. As Allwright (1984, p. 156) pointed out, language interaction in the classroom setting is collectively constructed by all learners and "the importance of interaction in classroom learning is precisely that it entails this joint management of learning."

SLA researchers have long been interested in the role of instruction in various contexts. Of central interest have been not only whether instruction has

any effects in general but also whether there is any relationship between different types of instruction and L2 development. Thus, the two most important questions often raised about the role of instruction are: Does instruction make a difference, and if so, what type of instruction is most effective?

Concerns about the role of instruction in general have been traditionally motivated in part by the position against instruction and the claim that formal instruction has little impact on L2 development (Cook, 1991; Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; Krashen, 1985; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Schwartz, 1993). Much of the early research on the role of instruction concentrated on this question. Findings from the extensive body of research over the past three decades, which have been summarized and discussed in many reviews (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis, 1994, 2006, 2008; Housen & Pierrard, 2005; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Long, 1983; Nassaji & Fotos, 2010; Nassaji, 2016; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada, 1997), provide strong evidence that instruction is not only helpful but also in many cases needed for L2 acquisition.

As for different types of instruction, a growing body of research has examined this question as well. However, to date, research in this area has not been able to show clearly what type of instruction best facilitates SLA. This suggests that the relationship between instruction and learning is complex and may be mediated by many factors. Thus, caution is warranted in making any causal relationship between any particular type of instruction and language learning.

The goal of this special issue is to contribute to the current body of research in ISLA by publishing studies that have examined not only the relative effects of specific types of instruction but also what mechanisms can mediate or explain their outcomes. The papers include reports of studies that have addressed some of the key areas of ISLA including those related to instructional training, feedback provision and effectiveness, processing instruction, and input enhancement. They have addressed different target structures and also different languages including Chinese, Spanish, French, and English. Conducted in both classroom and laboratory settings, the studies have explored issues in ways that have important relevance for both theory and classroom practice.

The special issue begins with a paper by Hawkes and Nassaji who examine the role of extensive recasts in learners' ability to detect and correct their own errors in subsequent posttests. Most previous laboratory studies of recasts have examined the role of intensive recasts provided repeatedly on the same target structure. This is different from recasts that occur naturally and spontaneously during communicative interaction. This study examined the beneficial effects of spontaneous recasts provided during small-group activities outside classroom contexts. Twenty-six ESL learners received either incidental recasts or no feedback on their erroneous utterances. Using a within-group research design and a

new testing methodology (video-based stimulated correction posttests), the study revealed that students successfully and partially successfully corrected more errors from error+recast episodes than from error-recast (no recast) episodes. This finding confirms that extensive recasts during small-group work may be beneficial to students.

Leow and Cerezo in the paper titled "Deconstructing the *I* and *SLA* in ISLA: One Curricular Approach" first provide a brief overview of the mechanisms assumed to be involved in instructed SLA, with a focus on their specific characteristics and assumptions. Then, taking a curricular perspective, they argue for a more comprehensive view of ISLA that takes into account not only the processes of ISLA but also a focus on language curriculum and the implications drawn from such a focus for instructed L2 environments.

Benati addresses the role of input enhancement. He provides a detailed overview of classroom studies in three key strands: input flood, textual enhancement, and processing instruction. *Input flood* is a technique in which learners are provided with numerous examples of a certain target form in the input (either oral or written). *Textual enhancement* aims to raise learners' attention to form by highlighting certain aspects of input by means of various typographic devices, such as bolding, underlining, and italicizing in written input. The assumption is that such visual enhancements make grammatical forms more noticeable and subsequently learnable. As for processing instruction, it is a particular approach to teaching language that is based on how learners interpret and process the input data. Benati's findings indicate that L2 learners benefit from each of the instructional strategies reviewed. However, their effectiveness may vary depending on the extent to which they provide learners with positive and negative evidence and also how explicitly they draw learners' attention to form. Among the three types of instructions reviewed, processing instruction with structured input practice is argued to be an effective way of enhancing input.

Loewen and Inceoglu examine the beneficial effects of textual enhancement on both learners' knowledge and perception of the Spanish preterit and imperfect verb forms. Using eye-tracking and pretest-posttest measures, their study revealed no effect of textual enhancement on learners' amount of attention and their knowledge of the targeted forms. The authors conclude that the study contributes to the body of research on textual enhancement and also suggest that eye-tracking could be used as a useful technique to assess learners' noticing.

Using a quasi-experimental study, Oliver and Young investigate the effect of vocabulary instruction on students' reading fluency and comprehension. The focus is on two types of training: bottom-up isolated vocabulary training and top-down contextual training. The study found that while isolated vocabulary training negatively affected learners' fluency and comprehension, context-

based training had a positive impact on fluency but no effect on comprehension. These results point to the complex interaction between type of vocabulary training and learners' reading fluency and comprehension. The authors discuss the implications of the findings for classroom instruction.

Zuniga and Simard explore the use and frequency of student-centered interactional practices in French (FSL) and English (ESL) classes in secondary schools in the Montreal area. The beneficial role of meaning-focused interaction has been amply documented in the L2 literature. Using a classroom observation scheme developed for the purpose of the research, the study analyzed 63 hours of classroom instruction in the two settings. The findings revealed that neither of two classes was as interactive as expected. However, notable differences were observed between the two with the FSL classes being more teacher-centered involving fewer interactive activities than the ESL classes. These findings point to the role of instructional context as an important variable affecting the use of interactive practices in classroom settings.

The last paper deals with the role of interactional feedback. Within the field of ISLA, interactional feedback is viewed as an important tool for drawing learners' attention to language forms during meaning-focused activities. However, most of the studies in this area have been in ESL or EFL contexts. Fu and Nassaji explore the provision of teacher feedback, learner uptake, as well as learner and teacher perception of feedback in an adult Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) classroom. Analysing 10 hours of videotaped student-teacher interaction, the study identified 12 types of feedback used by the teacher including recasts, delayed recasts, clarification requests, translation, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, explicit correction, asking a direct question, repetition, directing question to other students, re-ask, and using L1-English. Most feedback types, including recasts and delayed recasts, were followed by a notable degree of uptake. As for the students' and teacher's perception, they did not match and both the teacher and the students were generally not accurate in perceiving the frequency of each feedback type.

Taken together, the studies presented in this special issue provide a snapshot of the variety of issues investigated in the field of ISLA. It is our hope that the papers help shed light on understanding the role and complexity of instructed language learning in L2 development and also stimulate ideas that can be further explored in future research.

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