



PERCEIVED DEVELOPMENT OF SPOKEN GRAMMAR AWARENESS IN LEARNERS FOLLOWING TARGETED INSTRUCTION

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Abstract: This article explores learners' perceived development of spoken grammar awareness following targeted instructional interventions in second/foreign language learning contexts. Spoken grammar awareness is understood as learners' ability to notice, interpret, and appropriately use grammatical forms in real-time oral communication. Drawing on contemporary theories of communicative competence, noticing, and form-focused instruction, the study synthesizes existing research and presents an analytical discussion of pedagogical practices that support the development of spoken grammar. The article argues that targeted instruction—particularly when grounded in a grammatical minimum and integrated with communicative activities—positively influences learners' awareness, confidence, and accuracy in spoken interaction. Implications for teaching practice, curriculum design, and future research are discussed.

Keywords: spoken grammar, grammar awareness, perceived development, form-focused instruction, communicative competence

Introduction

In contemporary second and foreign language education, the role of grammar has undergone significant reconceptualization. While traditional approaches emphasized the mastery of formal grammatical rules primarily for written accuracy, modern communicative language teaching underscores the functional and interactional dimensions of grammar, particularly in spoken discourse. As a result,



spoken grammar awareness has gained increasing attention as an essential component of learners' overall communicative competence. Spoken grammar refers not merely to correctness at the sentence level, but to the dynamic use of grammatical resources that enable speakers to manage interaction, express meanings efficiently, and respond appropriately in real-time communication.

Despite growing recognition of its importance, spoken grammar remains a challenging area for many language learners. The transient nature of spoken interaction, coupled with cognitive constraints such as limited processing time and attentional resources, often makes it difficult for learners to notice and apply grammatical forms while speaking. Consequently, learners may possess explicit grammatical knowledge yet struggle to deploy it effectively in oral communication. This discrepancy has prompted researchers and educators to explore instructional approaches that can bridge the gap between grammatical knowledge and spoken language use [1].

In this context, targeted instruction has emerged as a promising pedagogical response. Targeted instruction involves the deliberate focus on selected grammatical features that are particularly salient and functional in spoken discourse. By prioritizing a grammatical minimum high – frequency and high-utility structures commonly used in everyday interaction – this approach seeks to make grammar instruction more relevant, manageable, and communicatively meaningful for learners[2]. Rather than overwhelming learners with extensive rule systems, targeted instruction emphasizes depth of understanding and practical application in authentic speaking tasks.

Equally important is the learners' own perception of their development. Perceived development of spoken grammar awareness refers to learners' subjective evaluation of how their ability to notice, understand, and use grammatical forms in speech evolves over time. Such perceptions play a critical role in shaping learners' motivation, confidence, and willingness to participate in oral interaction. Learners



who perceive progress in their spoken grammar are more likely to engage actively in communication, take linguistic risks, and employ self-regulatory strategies that further support language development.

Although empirical studies have examined the effects of form-focused and communicative instruction on grammatical accuracy, comparatively less attention has been paid to learners' perceived development of spoken grammar awareness. Understanding this perception is essential, as it complements objective measures of performance and offers insight into learners' cognitive and affective experiences during instruction[3]. Therefore, this article aims to explore the perceived development of spoken grammar awareness in learners following targeted instructional interventions. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives and pedagogical research, the study seeks to highlight how targeted instruction can foster greater awareness, confidence, and effectiveness in spoken grammar use, thereby contributing to more comprehensive and learner-centered approaches to language teaching.

Theoretical Background

The concept of spoken grammar has become central to contemporary discussions of communicative language competence. Unlike written grammar, which is typically characterized by planned, standardized, and syntactically complete structures, spoken grammar is shaped by immediacy, interaction, and the real-time demands of communication. Speakers frequently rely on ellipsis, repetitions, discourse markers, and flexible syntactic patterns to maintain fluency and interpersonal alignment. From the perspective of communicative competence, spoken grammar therefore extends beyond formal accuracy to encompass discourse competence, sociolinguistic appropriateness, and strategic use of language[4]. Learners who develop awareness of spoken grammar are better equipped to manage turn-taking, express stance and attitudes, negotiate meaning, and respond adaptively to their interlocutors in authentic communicative situations.



Grammar awareness within spoken interaction is closely connected to the Noticing Hypothesis, which suggests that conscious attention to linguistic forms in input is a prerequisite for language acquisition. In spoken contexts, however, noticing is particularly demanding due to time pressure, limited processing capacity, and the need to attend simultaneously to meaning and interactional cues. As a result, learners may fail to notice relevant grammatical features even when they are repeatedly exposed to them in oral input. Targeted instruction plays a crucial role in addressing this challenge by deliberately directing learners' attention to salient and functionally important grammatical forms as they occur in meaningful communicative contexts[5]. Through such focused attention, learners are more likely to develop explicit awareness of spoken grammar features, which can gradually contribute to their implicit and automatic use during real-time interaction.

An important dimension of grammar awareness development concerns learners' perceived development, defined as their subjective evaluation of progress in language learning. Research in applied linguistics and educational psychology indicates that learners' perceptions of improvement are closely associated with increased motivation, learner autonomy, and sustained engagement[6]. In the domain of spoken grammar, perceived development may be reflected in learners' growing confidence in speaking, heightened sensitivity to grammatical appropriateness in conversation, and improved ability to monitor and adjust their own oral output[7]. These perceptions are not merely affective responses; rather, they shape learners' willingness to communicate and their readiness to experiment with new grammatical forms in speech.

Against this theoretical background, targeted instruction emerges as a pedagogically sound approach to fostering spoken grammar awareness. Targeted instruction involves the deliberate selection and teaching of grammatical features that are most relevant to learners' immediate communicative needs[8]. This approach is often operationalized through the notion of a grammatical minimum,



which prioritizes high-frequency and high-utility structures commonly used in spoken discourse. By narrowing instructional focus to essential forms, targeted instruction reduces cognitive overload and allows learners to develop a deeper, more functional understanding of grammar as it operates in real-life communication.

Crucially, the effectiveness of targeted instruction depends on the integration of form and meaning. Rather than treating grammar as an isolated object of study, this approach embeds grammatical features within communicative tasks such as role-plays, discussions, simulations, and problem-solving activities[9]. Through such integration, learners experience grammar as a resource for meaning-making and interaction, rather than as an abstract system of prescriptive rules. This experiential engagement supports the development of spoken grammar awareness by enabling learners to observe how grammatical choices shape meaning, interpersonal relations, and discourse coherence in spoken interaction.

Feedback and reflection further enhance the impact of targeted instruction on learners' perceived development of spoken grammar awareness. Various forms of feedback, including recasts, prompts, and metalinguistic explanations, help learners notice discrepancies between their own output and target language norms[10]. When delivered in a supportive and timely manner, feedback encourages learners to refine their spoken grammar without undermining fluency or confidence. In addition, guided reflection activities – such as self-assessment checklists, learning journals, or post-task discussions – provide learners with opportunities to articulate their perceived progress and challenges. Such reflective practices reinforce grammar awareness by making learners more conscious of their development over time.

Learners' perceived development of spoken grammar awareness is often evidenced through several observable indicators. These include increased fluency accompanied by acceptable levels of grammatical accuracy, reduced anxiety during speaking tasks, and a greater ability to self-correct in the course of interaction[11]. Learners may also report enhanced awareness of discourse-level grammatical



features, such as the use of connectors, pragmatic markers, and appropriate tense-aspect choices in conversation[12]. Together, these indicators suggest that learners are not only acquiring grammatical forms, but also developing a more nuanced understanding of how grammar functions in spoken discourse.

Perceptions of development are shaped by a range of contextual and instructional factors, including the clarity of instruction, the relevance of grammatical content, opportunities for meaningful communicative practice, and the overall classroom environment[13]. Supportive interaction, constructive feedback, and a focus on communicative success tend to foster positive perceptions, whereas overly prescriptive or error-focused correction may hinder learners' confidence and sense of progress. Although perceived development does not always align perfectly with objectively measured gains in grammatical accuracy, research suggests a generally positive relationship between learners' perceptions and their actual spoken performance[14]. Learners who believe that their spoken grammar is improving are more likely to take communicative risks, participate actively in interaction, and apply grammatical knowledge spontaneously, thereby creating conditions for continued development.

Pedagogical implications

The findings and discussions presented in this article highlight several implications for language teaching practice. First, educators should explicitly address spoken grammar as a distinct component of language competence. Second, adopting a grammatical minimum can help streamline instruction and align it with communicative needs[15]. Third, integrating reflection and self-assessment into classroom practice can enhance learners' awareness of their own development. Finally, teacher education programs should prepare instructors to balance accuracy and fluency while fostering positive learner perceptions.



Conclusion

This article has examined the perceived development of spoken grammar awareness in learners following targeted instructional interventions, highlighting its theoretical significance and pedagogical relevance within contemporary language education. Spoken grammar awareness, as demonstrated throughout the discussion, constitutes a critical dimension of communicative competence, enabling learners to use grammatical resources flexibly and appropriately in real-time interaction. Unlike traditional views of grammar that prioritize written accuracy and rule memorization, spoken grammar awareness emphasizes functional use, discourse sensitivity, and interactional effectiveness.

The analysis underscores that targeted instruction plays a pivotal role in fostering such awareness. By focusing on a grammatical minimum composed of high-frequency and high-utility structures, targeted instruction helps reduce cognitive overload and aligns grammatical learning with learners' immediate communicative needs. When grammatical forms are embedded within meaningful communicative tasks and supported by timely feedback and reflective practices, learners are more likely to notice relevant features of spoken grammar and integrate them into their oral production. This process not only contributes to measurable improvements in spoken performance but also enhances learners' confidence and willingness to engage in communication.

Equally important, this article has emphasized the role of learners' perceived development as a central component of spoken grammar acquisition. Learners' perceptions of progress influence motivation, self-regulation, and risk-taking behaviors, all of which are essential for sustained language development. Even when perceived gains do not fully coincide with objective measures of grammatical accuracy, positive perceptions can create favorable conditions for continued learning by encouraging active participation and experimentation with language forms. Therefore, perceived development should be regarded not as a secondary or



subjective outcome, but as an integral aspect of spoken grammar awareness that interacts dynamically with instructional input and communicative experience.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that language educators should explicitly address spoken grammar as a distinct instructional focus and incorporate learner reflection into regular classroom practice. Creating supportive learning environments where accuracy and fluency are balanced, and where feedback is framed constructively, can further strengthen learners' awareness and perceptions of development. Teacher education programs may also benefit from placing greater emphasis on spoken grammar pedagogy and on strategies for enhancing learners' metacognitive awareness of their own progress.

In conclusion, developing spoken grammar awareness through targeted instruction represents a promising pathway toward more effective and learner-centered language teaching. By valuing both observable performance and learners' perceived development, educators and researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how spoken grammar is acquired and used. Future research is encouraged to empirically investigate the relationship between perceived and actual development across diverse instructional contexts, proficiency levels, and learner populations, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and holistic model of spoken grammar development.

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