Systematic Review of Studies on the Teaching and Learning of Language Skills in Arabic as an Additional Language (AL2)

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ARABIC AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

*The **learning and teaching** of **any variety of Arabic** as anything **other than a first language***

Includes:

- Foreign language learners (e.g., L1 English speakers learning AL2 in school)
- Second language learners (e.g., immigrant learners in an Arabic-speaking country)
- Heritage language learners studying Arabic in non-Arabic speaking countries in an educational setting

Does not include:

- Native Arabic-speakers learning MSA in Arabic speaking countries
- Heritage learners of Arabic acquiring the language only at home

THE FOUR SKILLS

Why the four skills?

‘The four language skills are at the heart of current practice […]. It is now usual in course books to find sections dedicated to **listening, speaking, reading** and **writing** alongside the more traditional activities of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary’ (Burns and Siegel, 2018, p. xiii)

Focus of this presentation: Speaking

WHAT IS A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW?

‘A review of existing research using explicit, accountable rigorous research methods’ (Gough et al., 2017, p.5)

Exhaustive (replicable) search of existing empirical literature

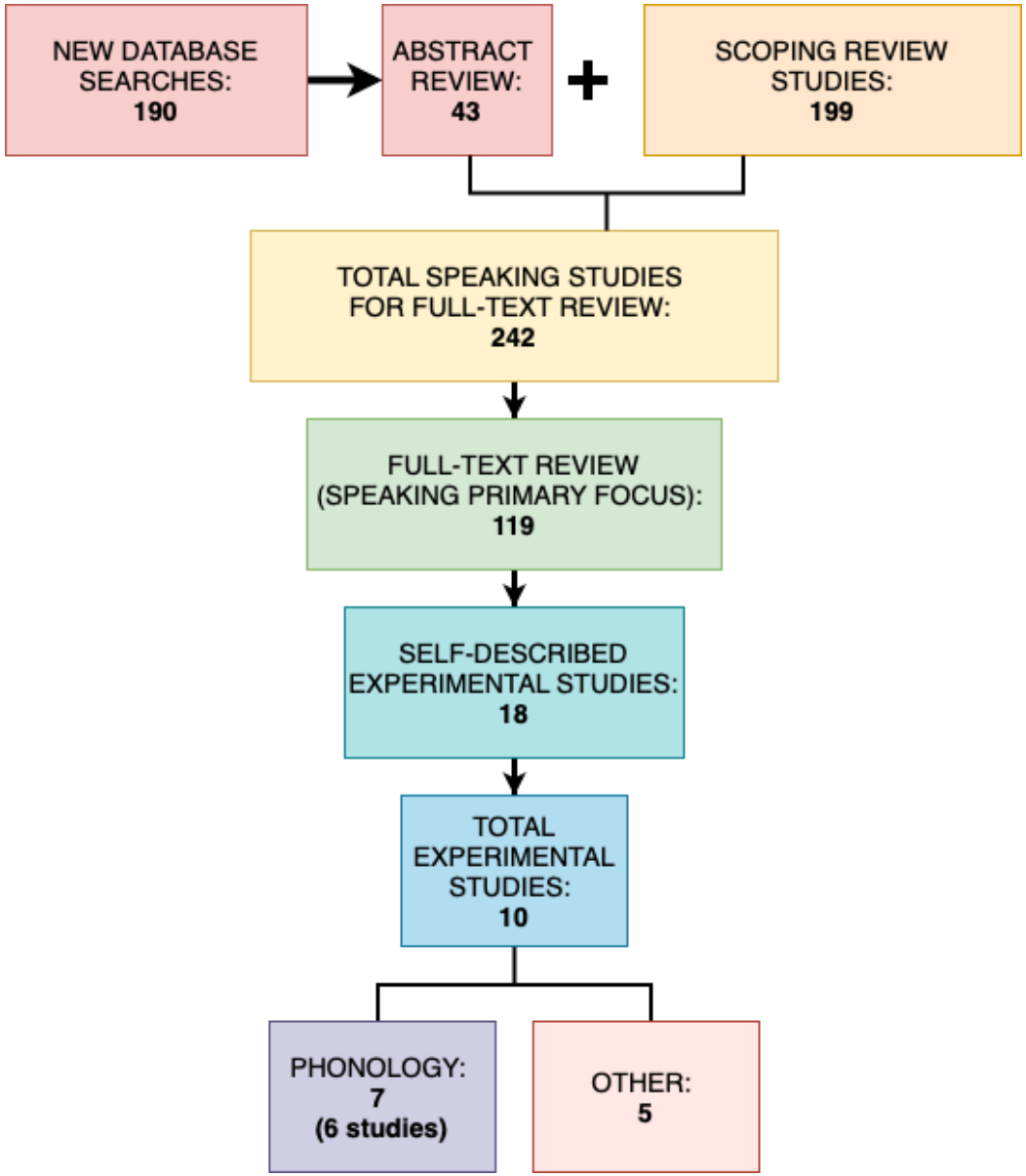
Identification of appropriate studies (inclusion criteria)

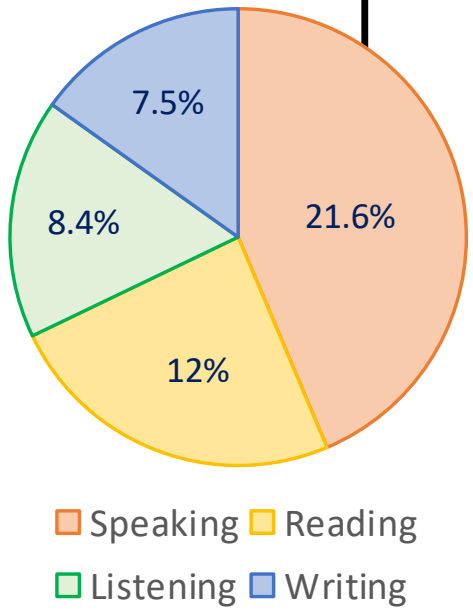
Extraction, evaluation and synthesis of information

INCLUSION CRITERIA

- ✓ Related to learning or teaching of AL2 speaking
- ✓ Empirical study with an experimental design
- ✓ Contains at least one measured outcome related to speaking skills
- ✓ Published in English

SPEAKING SEARCH RESULTS





SCOPING REVIEW TOTAL STUDIES: 758

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WHAT IS AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY?

A research design in which:

one or more variables are **manipulated** (the treatment or intervention) and any effects on other variables (the outcomes) are measured, in order to determine whether a **causal relationship** exists between them (Rogers & Révész, 2019; Loewen & Plonsky, 2016)

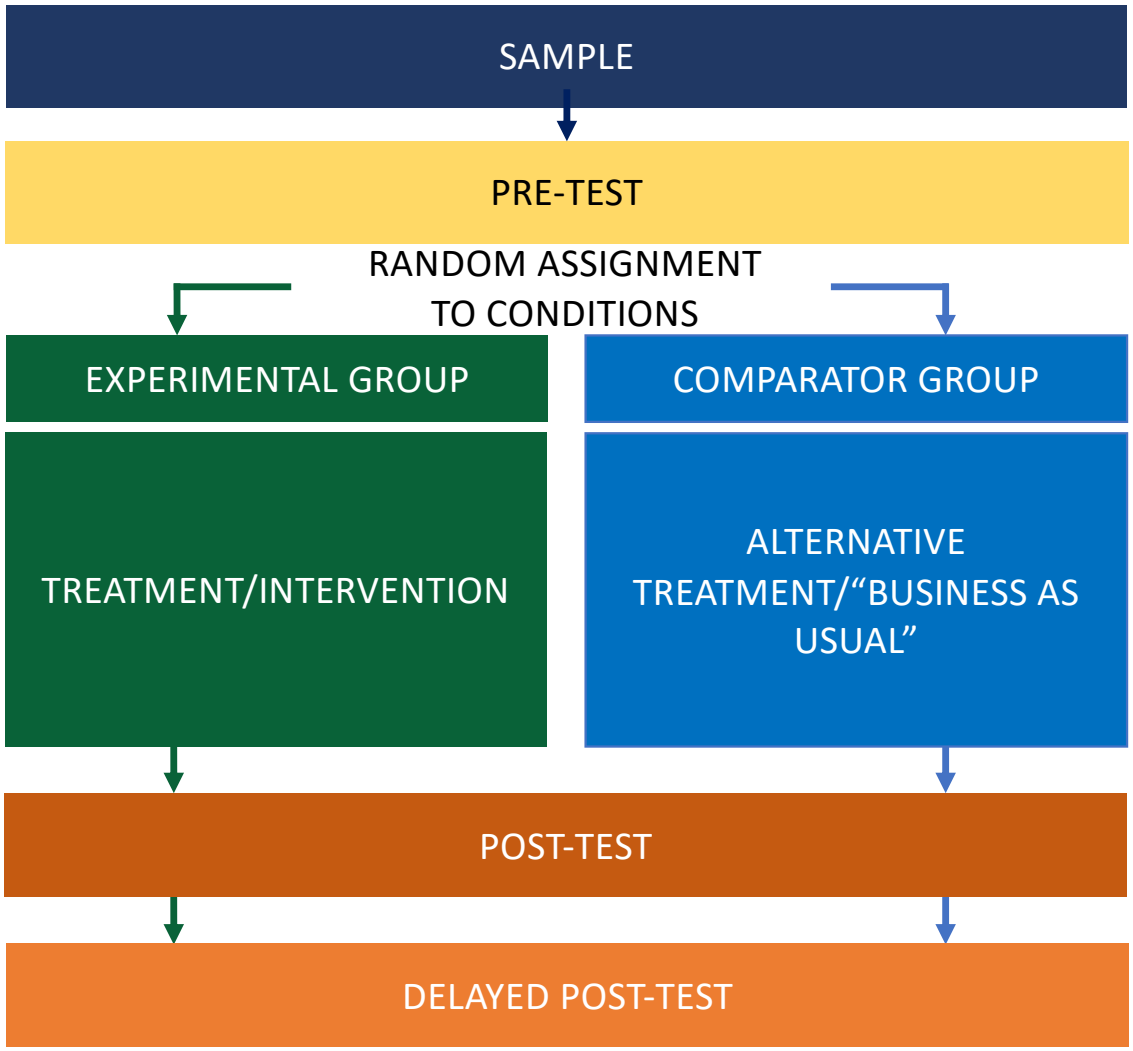
Strong experimental designs are often characterized by:

(a) the presence of a **control or comparison group**, which does not receive the intervention;

(b) random assignment of participants to these groups

(c) testing of the dependent variables both before and after the intervention (**pre- and post-tests**).

WHAT IS AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY?



Attrition?

EVALUATING EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

Gorard's "Sieve"

Design	*How were groups allocated to conditions?*	★★★★
Scale	*How many participants per group?*	★★★★
Dropout	*How many participants dropped out?*	★★★★
Outcomes	*How valid are the outcome measures?*	★★★★
Fidelity	*How faithfully is the intervention implemented, relative to what was intended?*	★★★★
Validity	*Are there any other threats to study validity?*	★★★★

Adapted from: Gorard, S. (2014). A proposal for judging the trustworthiness of research findings. Radical Statistics, 110, 47-59.

EVALUATING EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

★★★★

- **Design:** Randomized controlled trial (RCT)
- **Scale:** Large (>50 participants per group)
- **Dropout:** None or minimal
- **Outcomes:** Standardized tests used (e.g., IELTS tests)
- **Fidelity:** Intervention delivered exactly as intended and uniformly to all participants
- **Validity:** No evidence of any threats to validity (e.g., participants in different groups spoke to each other; scoring of tests was not 'blind to condition')

AND

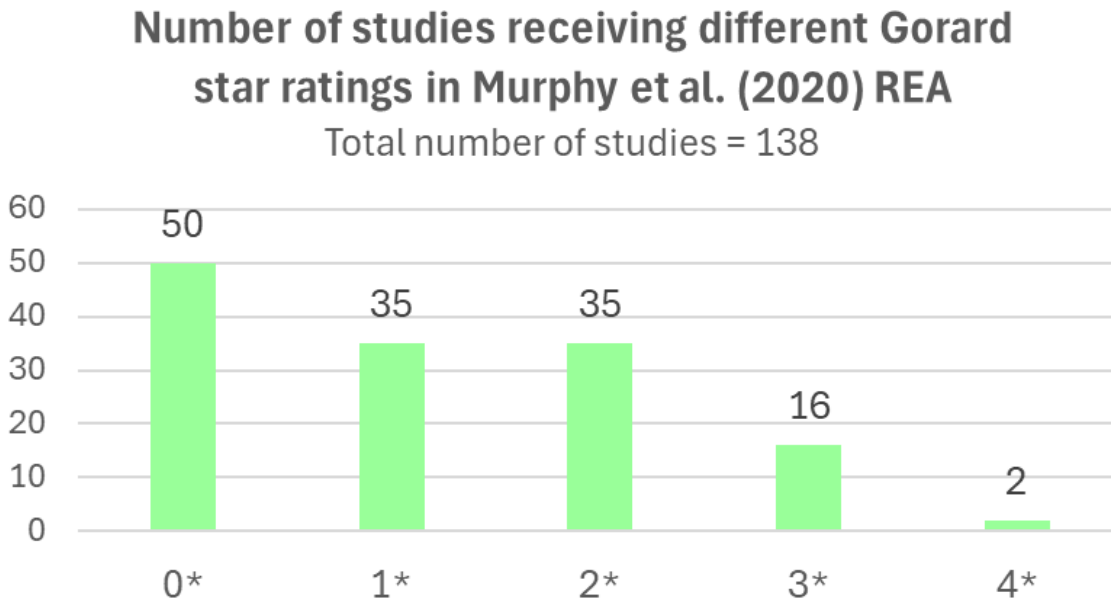
- If relevant information is not reported → 0* for that category
- 'an evaluation will be judged to be as good as the lowest classification it has achieved for each of the six categories' (Gorard 2014:54)

EVALUATING EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

Education Endowment Foundation

Foreign language learning and its impact on wider academic outcomes: A rapid evidence assessment

Victoria A. Murphy, Henriette Arndt, Jessica Briggs Baffoe-Djan, Hamish Chalmers, Ernesto Macaro, Heath Rose, Robert Vanderplank & Robert Woore



EVALUATING EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

Assessing implications

- ★★★★ : Large-scale RCT with nationally representative sample: supports implications for policy at national level
- ★☆☆☆ / ☆☆☆☆ :
  - May be well conducted and may be very valuable
  - Supports implications for a particular classroom or school.
  - May generate ideas that can inform practice more widely.

Beware claims and implications that are not warranted

A writing study taught paragraph-writing skills to 15 learners with no control group. Grading of students' output not explained. No statistical analyses.

'This study has both pedagogical and policy-level implications for fostering paragraph writing skills … The policy-level implications underline the need to introduce learner-centric language teaching methodologies in higher education'

An alternative conceptualization

Gorard rating	Mountain level	Long view	Technical expertise / equipment	
-	Woodland **(reflective practice)**	No view beyond the immediate trees	None	
0	Small hill (action research)	Shape and layout of the woods around you	A bit of effort. Water bottle, snack, waterproof	
1 **(action research)**	Upland hill	Long view across neighbouring hills. View down into the valley, lined with trees – some individual trees.	Hard work – walk takes several hours; equipment for emergency or bad weather.	

2	Scottish mountain	Neighbouring and some distant peaks. Patches of forest in valleys, some individual trees visible.	Good fitness – walk takes all day; navigation skills; bad weather gear.	
3	Alpine peak	Landscape spread out below – valleys, patches of forest, villages; high mountains in the distance.	High fitness, technical skill and equipment. Trip lasts 1-2 days; prior planning.	
4	Himalayan summit **(large-scale RCT)**	Vast panorama - row upon row of high peaks stretching into the furthest distance.	Extensive training, technical skill, equipment, prior planning; support team; may take weeks.	

PHONOLOGY STUDIES

PHONOLOGY STUDIES

Study 1	(USA)	2023	Perception and production of L2 Arabic emphatic consonants: The role of communicative and traditional form-based approaches	ت - **ط** ذ - **ظ** د - **ض** س - **ص**	Journal article
Study 2	(Saudi)	2016	Teaching of Arabic language proficiency (pronunciation) to non-native speakers: Designing interventions using ICT	ح خ **ص ض ط ظ** ع غ	Dissertation
Study 3*	(Saudi)	2018 a	Investigating the perception and production of the Arabic pharyngealised sounds by L2 learners of Arabic.	س ش ز **ص ظ** ذ ف ح ه خ غ ع ث	Dissertation
Study 4		2018 b		س - **ص** - د - **ض** - ذ - **ظ** - ت - **ط**	
Study 5	(USA)	2008	Second language instruction with phonological knowledge: Teaching Arabic to speakers of English	Whole alphabet	Dissertation
Study 6*	(USA)	1993	Teaching second language phonology: A comparative study of form-rules and content-meaning techniques.	ح خ **ص ض ط ظ** ع غ ق	Dissertation
Study 7	(USA)	2020	Beneficial Effects of Musicality on the Development of Productive Phonology Skills in Second Language Acquisition	Full sentences	Journal article

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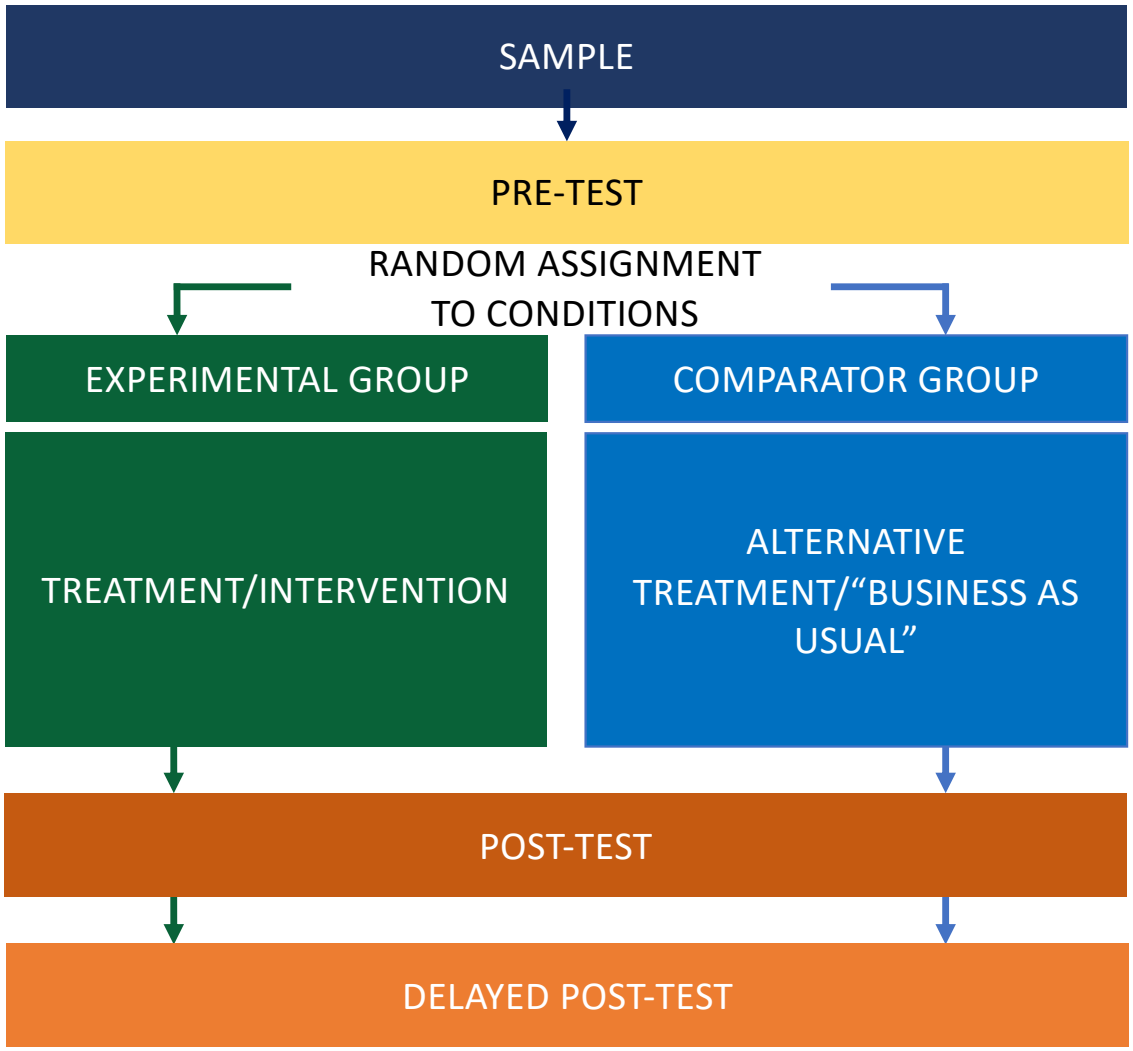
EXPERIMENTAL STUDY DESIGN



Phonology

Study 1 (2023)

SAMPLE: 19 English-speaking American university 'beginner' students of AL2 (studying Arabic 1-4 years)

ASSIGNMENT: Random (Indiv.)

PRE-TEST: Audio recordings of sounds in phrases. Consonant at beginning of word. Acoustic measurements used to determine accuracy. Number of words unclear.

EXPLICIT INST. GROUP: n=9	COMPARATOR GROUP: n=10
90 mins (in 9th week of semester) Conducted by researcher • Visual description of sound origins • Contrast of the differences between English and Arabic • Listening + speaking tasks	Pronunciation not explicitly taught (Lack of clear description)

POST-TEST: Repeat of pre-test. Conducted in 10th week. Audio analysis software used to measure accuracy (not clear how this was assessed)

~~DELAYED POST TEST~~

Study focus: Effect of targeted explicit instruction on pronunciation of emphatic-plain consonant contrasts

Phonological focus: Emphatic-plain consonant contrasts

ت-ط \ ذ-ظ \ د-ض \ س-ص

Findings:

- **No overall effect** of intervention (no difference between groups)
- Some differences in performance related to the type of consonant being measured
- Type of consonant mattered more than whether participants received the intervention or not

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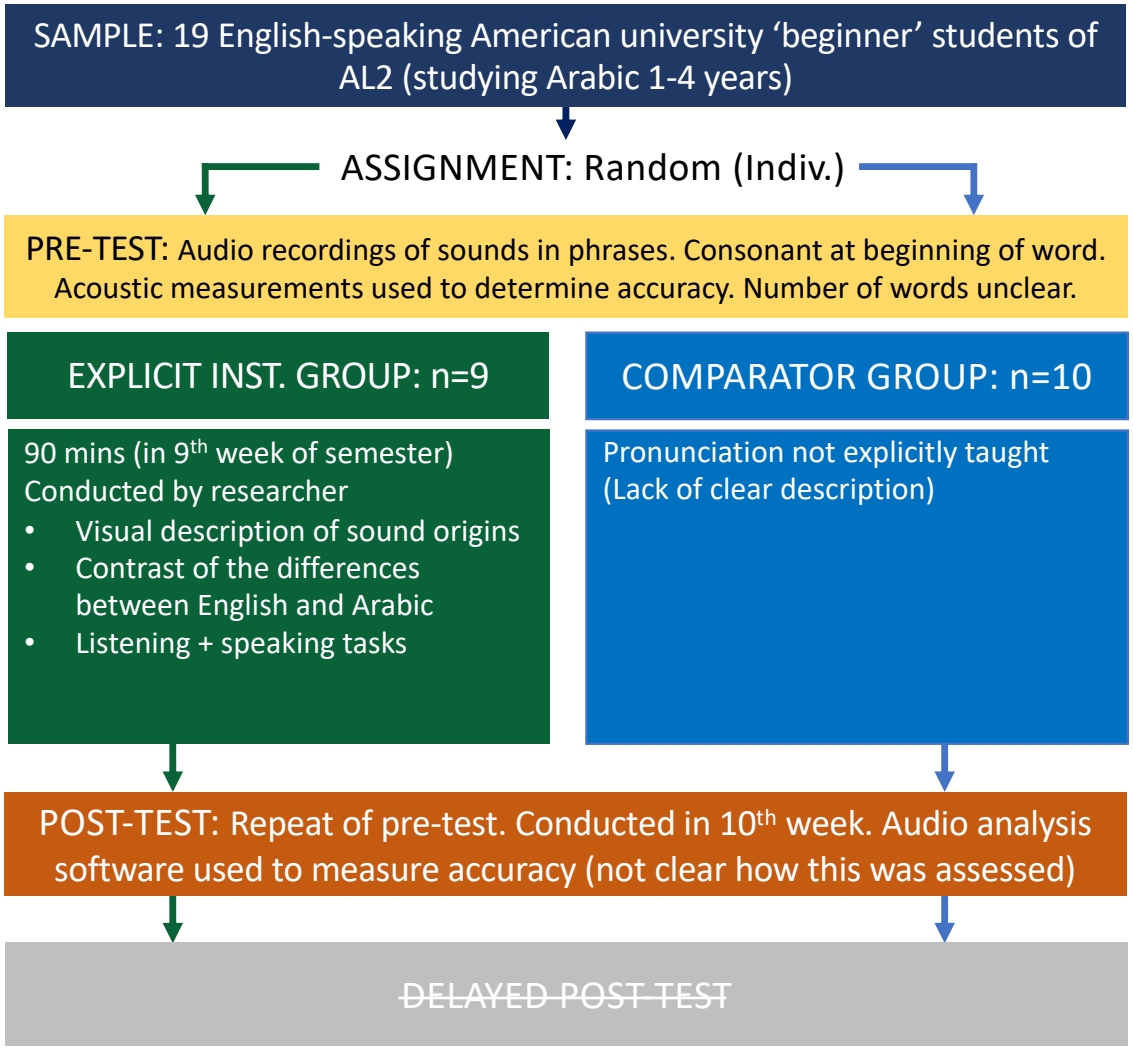
Phonology

Study 1 (2023)



Implications:

*'emphatic-plain consonant contrasts **should** be highlighted in pronunciation teaching in the language classroom' (p.10)*

*'study provided **empirical evidence in support of both** the traditional form-based as well as the communicative pronunciation teaching approaches.' (p.10)*

Phonology

Study 1 (2023)

Strengths	Limitations
• Random assignment of participants • Pre-test + post-test • Audio data analysed using computer software • Statistical analyses between groups conducted	• Small sample size • Variation in learner levels • Lack of clarity in design description • How was accuracy determined?

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

Phonology

Study 2 (2016)

SAMPLE: 32 adult males; multiple L1s; Level 2 class at a religious learning institute in Saudi Arabia

ASSIGNMENT: Random (Indiv.)

PRE-TEST: 2 oral tests: a) 8 words – 1 letter per word;
b) recitation of Quranic chapter

TECHNOLOGY GROUP: n=16	COMPARATOR GROUP: n=16

55 min session x14 weeks
• Stage 1 – Use of pronunciation software developed by researcher (5 weeks)
  • Pronunciation test 1
• Stage 2 – Addition of Youtube clips with instructions on accurate pronunciation (5 weeks)
  • Pronunciation test 2
• Stage 3 – Take home CDs/cassettes (4 weeks)
	No clear description of condition (provided with the same take-home CDs/cassettes)

POST-TEST: Repeat of pre-test. (Different stimuli)

~~DELAYED POST TEST~~

Study focus: Effect of technology-enhanced constructivist learning approach on pronunciation

Phonological focus: 'Difficult consonants'

ح خ ص ض ط ظ ع غ

Findings:

- Errors declined amongst all students (based only on raw scores)
- No between-group comparisons
- Technology usage popular among students (results from qualitative component of study)

Phonology

Study 2 (2016)

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POST-TEST: Repeat of pre-test. (Different stimuli)

~~DELAYED POST TEST~~

Implications:

'this study is able to provide guidance for enacting pedagogical change in the form of a constructivist student-centred technology-based pedagogy which has been shown to be both popular with students while also ***competently delivering similar, if not better, student learning outcomes****.' (p.223)*

'I would urge the Ministry of Education to formulate a holistic policy regarding the delivery of curriculum through the use of technology.' (p.230)

Phonology

Study 2 (2016)

Strengths	Limitations
• Random assignment of participants • 14 weeks of treatment • Inclusion of pre-test and post-test	• Small sample size, all males • Raw scores only – not statistical analyses • No between-group comparisons • Lack of clarity on instrument design + validity • Overlap in treatments • Unclear how errors were assessed

Evaluation: ★★★★

Phonology

Study 3 (2018)

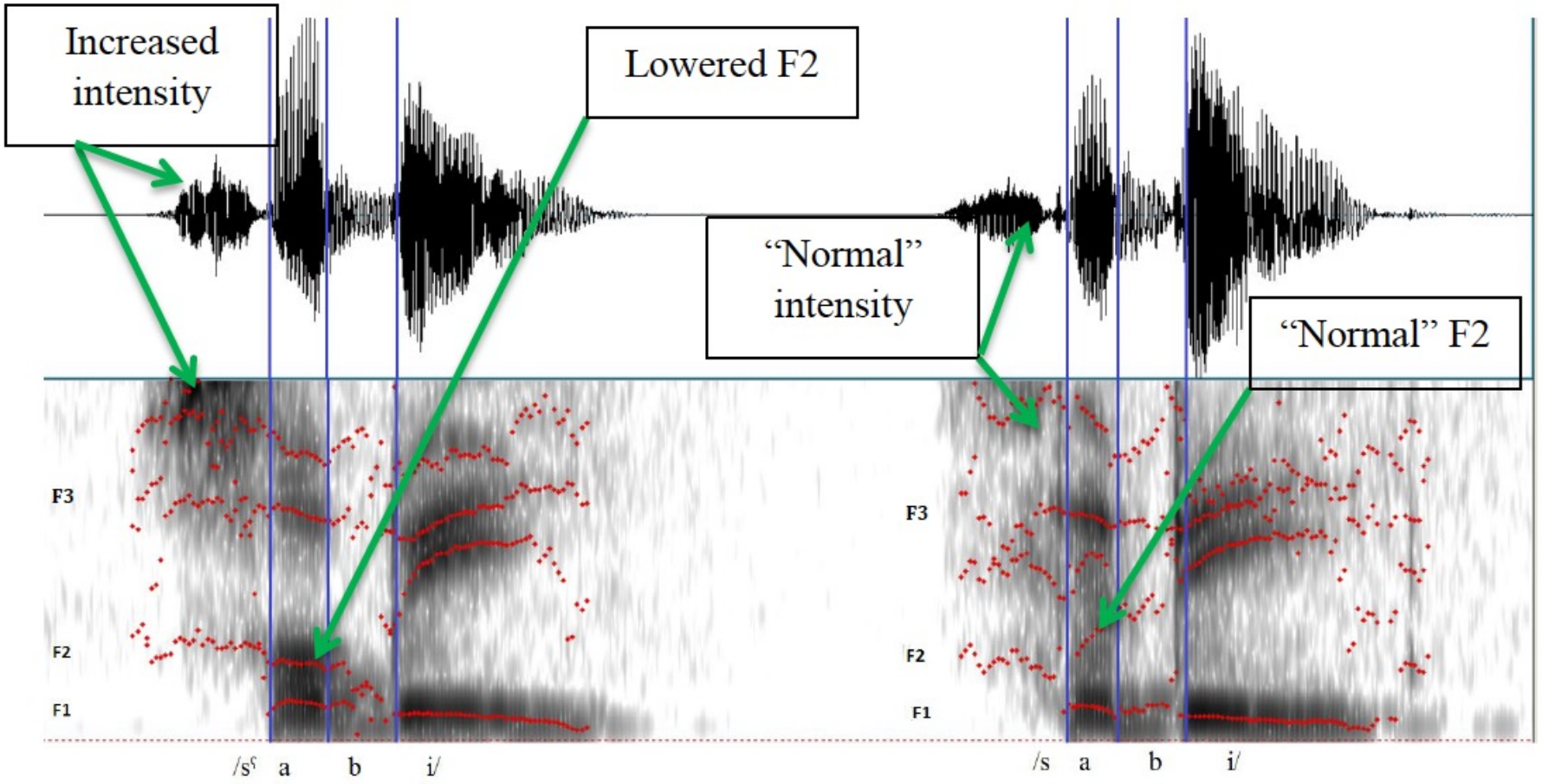
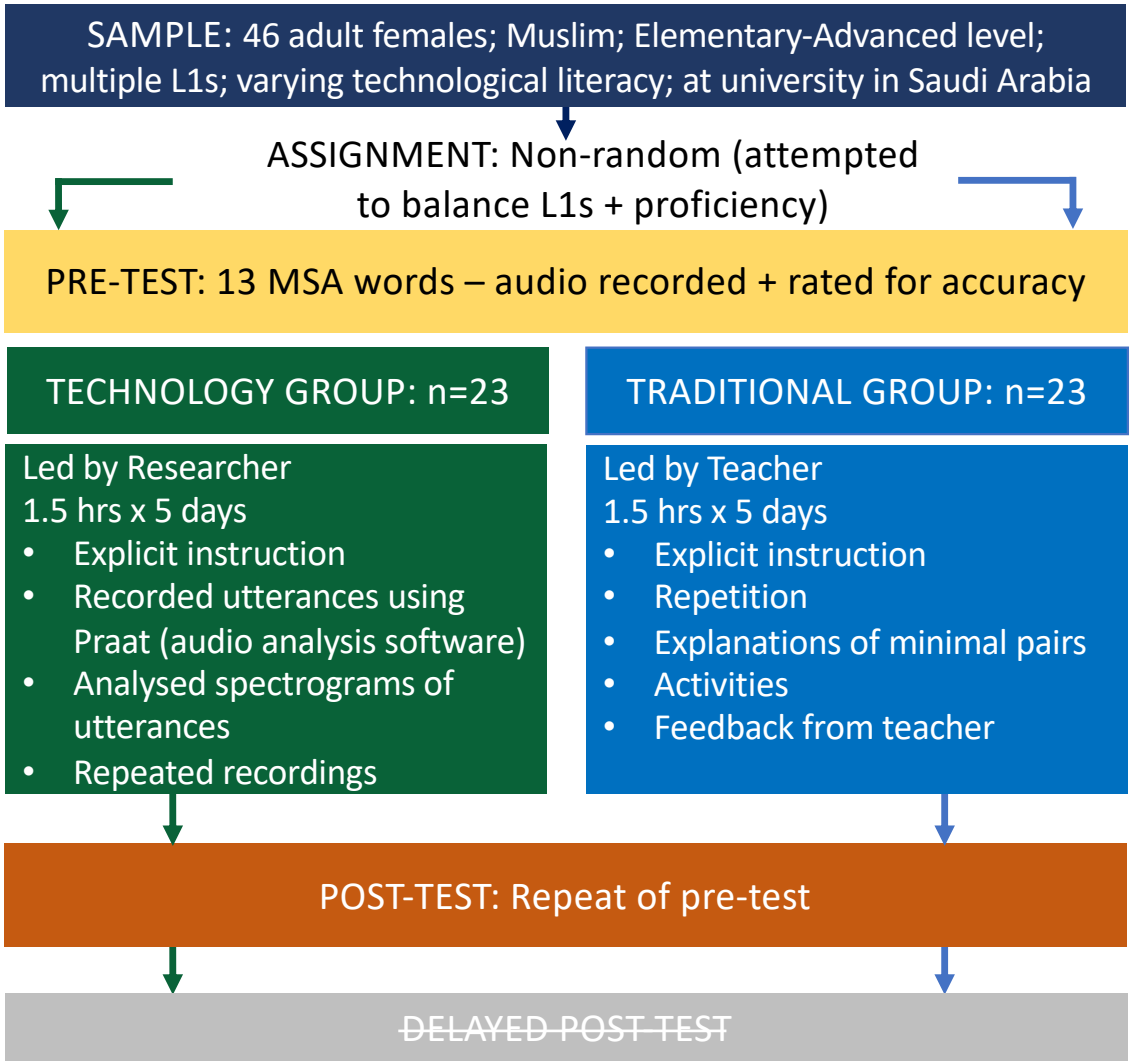


Figure 2.3: The acoustic shape of the words [sˤɑbi] 'boy' and /sabi/ 'steal'

Phonology

Study 3 (2018)



Implications:

*Since the speech analysis training was effective for acquiring correct Arabic emphatic and fricative sounds, **it should be adopted** to teach intelligible pronunciation, alongside traditional techniques and other technologies that provide aural input and articulatory cues.' (p.309)*

Phonology

Study 3 (2018)

Strengths	Limitations
• 5 days of treatment • Inclusion of pre-test and post-test • Range of statistical analyses conducted	• Small sample size, all female • Uneven distribution b/w groups in proficiency + L1 + computer skills • No control group • Overlap in treatments • Tests = only 13 words • Difference in teacher • Religious motivations

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

Phonology

Study 4 (2018)

SAMPLE: 38 adult females; Muslim; Elementary-Advanced level; 3 different L1 (Urdu; Mandarin; English); varying levels of computer literacy; at university in Saudi

ASSIGNMENT: Non-random (attempted to balance L1s + proficiency)

PRE-TEST: 30 words in phrases (combinations of letters with different vowels) – audio recorded; rated for accuracy by 11 raters

TECHNOLOGY GROUP: n=19	TRADITIONAL GROUP: n=19
TREATMENT: Led by Researcher 1.5 hrs x 4 days • Explicit instruction • Self-recording • Guided analysis of spectrograms • Practice + re-recording • Training on consonants + vowels	TREATMENT: Led by Researcher 1.5 hrs x 4 days • Reading passages and sentences, discriminating minimal pairs, receiving verbal pronunciation instructions + feedback (no instruction on vowels, only consonants)

POST-TEST: (4 days after training) Repeat of pre-test

~~DELAYED POST TEST~~

Study focus: Effectiveness of technology-based instruction over traditional instruction in teaching pronunciation of emphatic contrasts

Phonological focus: Emphatic pharyngeals (contrast pairs) in different word positions

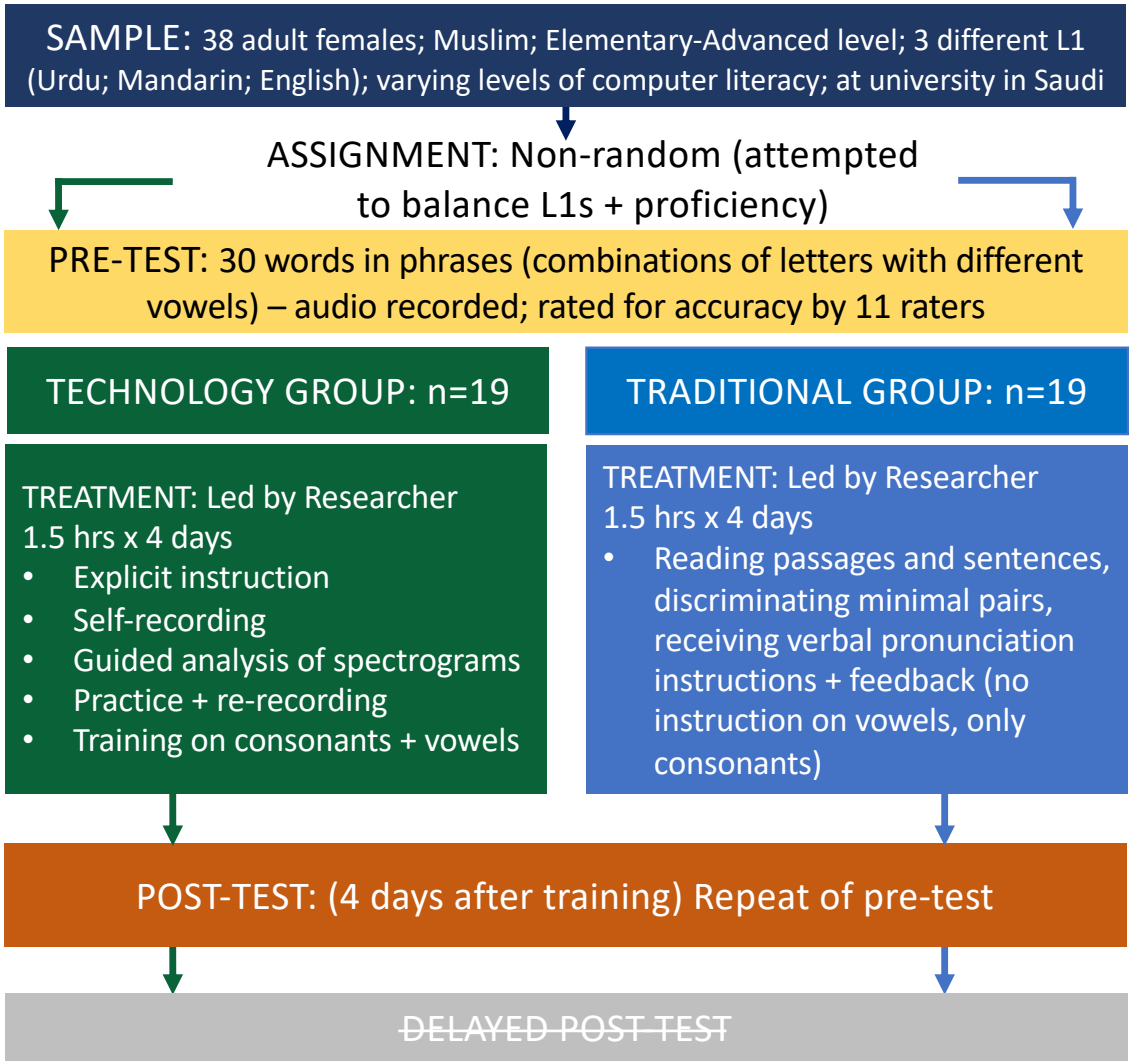
س\ص – د\ض – ذ\ظ – ت\ط

Findings:

- **No significant differences between groups in pre- or post-test**
- Differences between groups in which letters they improved in

Phonology

Study 4 (2018)



Implications:

*'The technology method is **beneficial to L2 learners of Arabic in different proficiency levels and language groups**.' (p.308)*

Phonology

Study 4 (2018)

Strengths	Limitations
• 4 days of treatment • Inclusion of pre-test and post-test • Range of statistical analyses conducted • Researcher led both conditions • 11 raters for accuracy scores	• Small sample size, all female • Non-random allocation - Uneven distribution between groups in proficiency + L1 + computer skills • No control group • Mispronunciations maybe misreadings among beginners • Overlap in treatments

Evaluation: 

Phonology

Study 5 (2008)

SAMPLE: 46 adult learners, enrolled in Arabic 101, at university in USA, L1 – American English, 29 males, 17 females

ASSIGNMENT: Self-selection into groups; one group randomly chosen as control

~~PRE-TEST~~

EXPLICIT GROUP: n=24	COMPARATOR GROUP: n=22
TREATMENT: Researcher + Instructor 20 hrs over 5 weeks (10 each) • Instruction on Arabic phonetics + intro to comparative phonologies (Arabic + English) (researcher) • Drills (main instructor) • Used Alif Baa textbook • Access to website with instruction materials on phonology	TREATMENT: Researcher + Instructor 20 hrs over 5 weeks (10 each) • instruction on the letters and sounds of Arabic without the phonetics and English-Arabic phonology • Used Alif Baa textbook

POST-TEST: Audio-recordings of words read aloud (all letters of alphabet in beginning, middle and end positions) completed online at home (scored by 4 raters for accuracy)

~~DELAYED POST-TEST~~

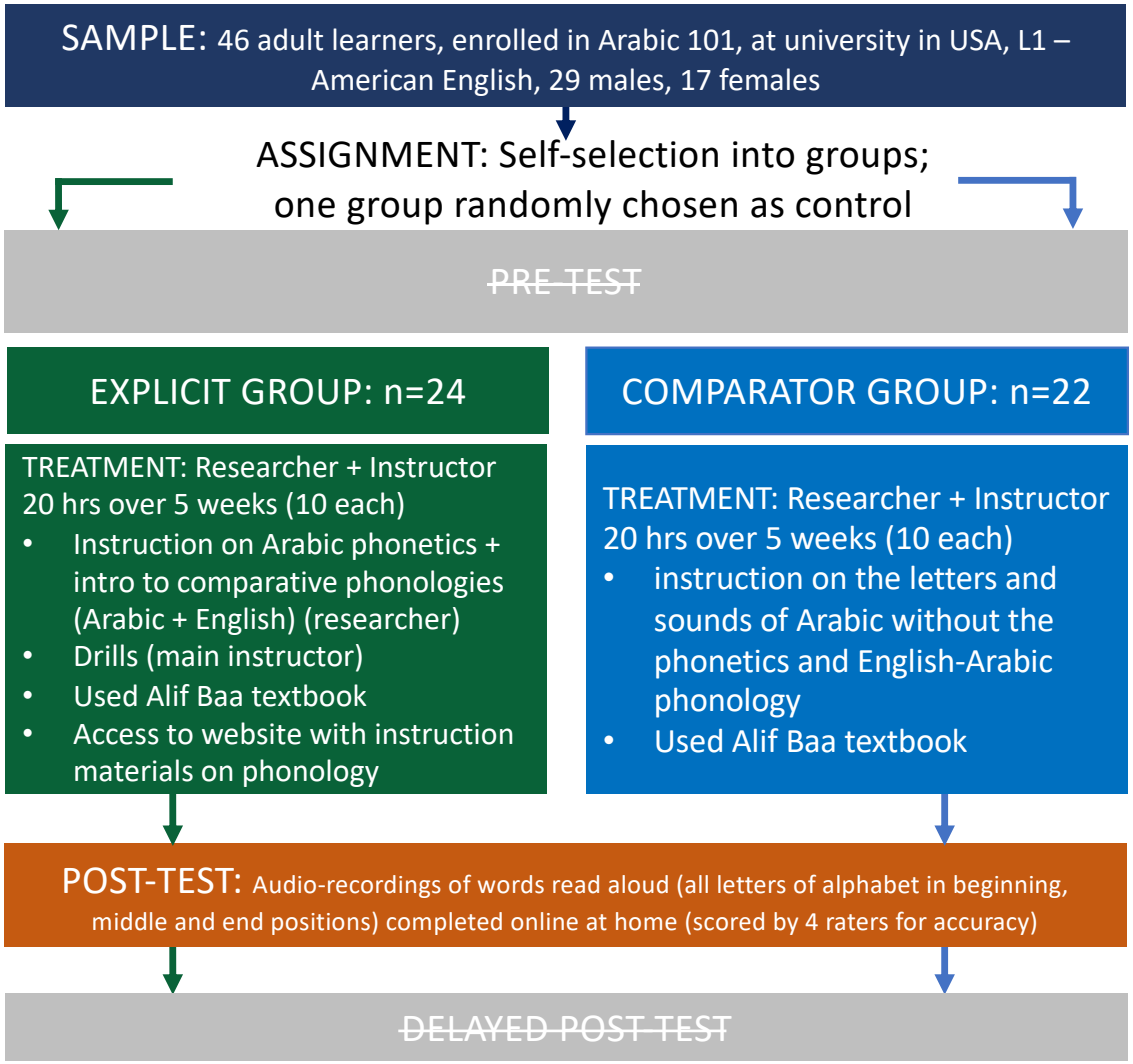
Study focus: Effect of explicit instruction in phonetics and the phonologies of English and Arabic on pronunciation

Focus of study: All letters of the Arabic alphabet

Findings:

- **Experimental group statistically outperformed comparator group overall on production post-test**
- Experimental group outperformed comparator group on sounds which do not exist in English
- No difference between groups for sounds which exist in English
- Phonology instruction well-received

Study 5 (2008)



Implications:

*'The findings of this study provide **strong support** for recommending the inclusion of phonetics and phonology components in second language instruction.'* (p.151)

'it is very important that introductory second language textbooks include an introduction to basic phonetics and comparative English-Arabic phonology.' (p.152)

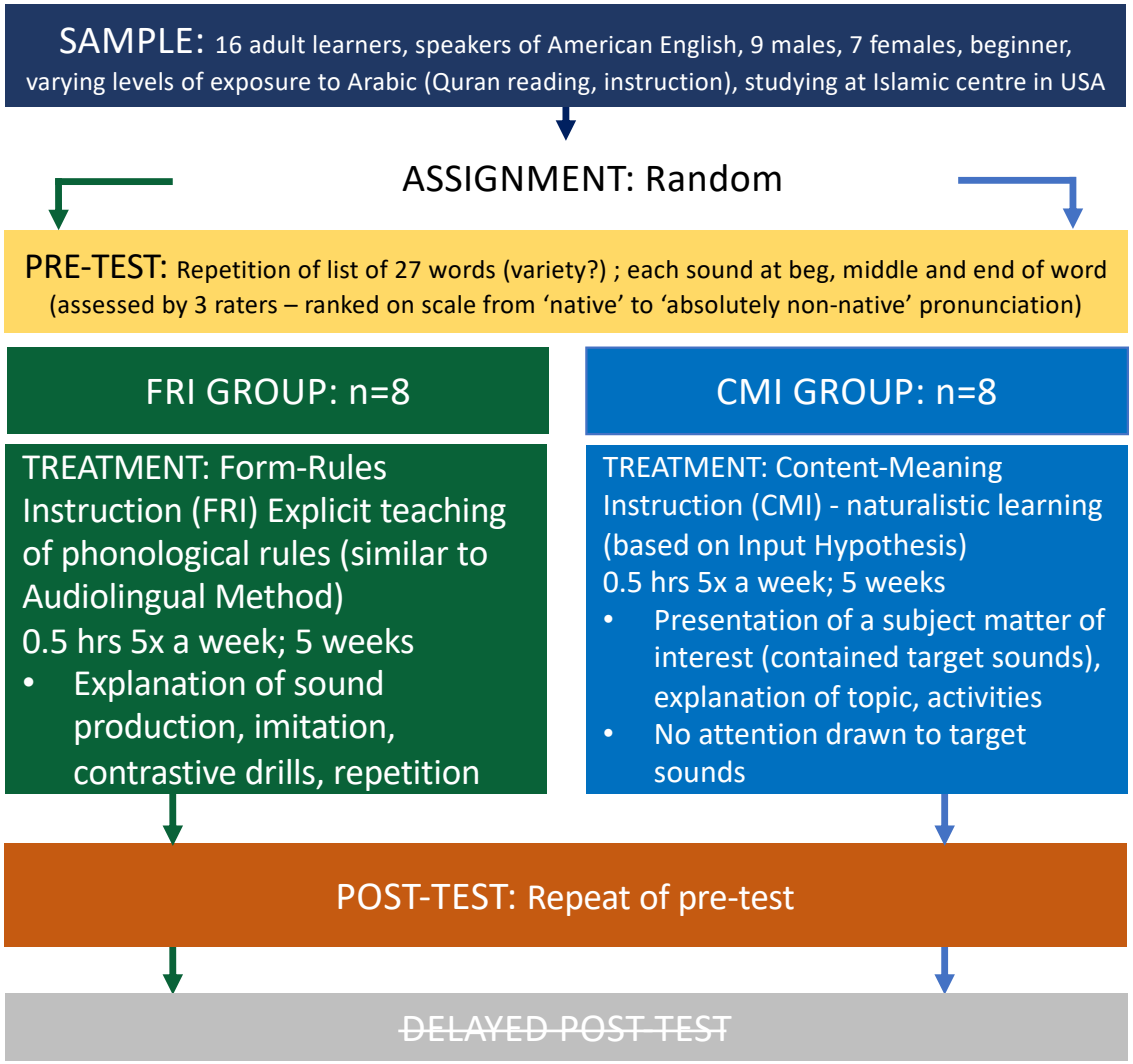
Study 5 (2008)

Strengths	Limitations
• Mixed-gender sample – same L1 • 20 hours of instruction • Researcher + instructor the same in both conditions • Same text-book in both conditions • Examined all letters of the alphabet • Conducted a range of statistical analyses	• No pre-test • Non-random allocation • Online tests done at home • Tests not validated • No control for other L2s spoken • Unclear description of intervention

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

Phonology

Study 6 (1993)



Study focus: Comparison of Form-Rule Instruction (FRI) and Content-Meaning Instruction (CMI)

Phonology focus: 'Unfamiliar sounds' to L1 English speakers

ح خ ص ض ط ظ ع غ ق

Findings:

- **FRI group made statistically significant improvements between pre- + post-tests**
- **FRI significantly outperformed CMI on post-tests**
- CMI no significant gains
- FRI had more impact on accuracy of word-initial pronunciation that word-final
- Letter ض = most difficult

Study 6 (1993)

SAMPLE: 16 adult learners, speakers of American English, 9 males, 7 females, beginner, varying levels of exposure to Arabic (Quran reading, instruction), studying at Islamic centre in USA

ASSIGNMENT: Random

PRE-TEST: Repetition of list of 27 words (variety?) ; each sound at beg, middle and end of word (assessed by 3 raters – ranked on scale from 'native' to 'absolutely non-native' pronunciation)

FRI GROUP: n=8	CMI GROUP: n=8
TREATMENT: Form-Rules Instruction (FRI) Explicit teaching of phonological rules (similar to Audiolingual Method) 0.5 hrs 5x a week; 5 weeks • Explanation of sound production, imitation, contrastive drills, repetition	TREATMENT: Content-Meaning Instruction (CMI) - naturalistic learning (based on Input Hypothesis) 0.5 hrs 5x a week; 5 weeks • Presentation of a subject matter of interest (contained target sounds), explanation of topic, activities • No attention drawn to target sounds

POST-TEST: Repeat of pre-test

~~DELAYED POST TEST~~

Implications:

*'the study **cannot make a sweeping claim** that FRI is absolutely more effective than CMI in second-language instruction.'* (p.143)

*'Since this study shows that **FRI is relatively effective** in sound production and recognition, **it seems desirable** that teachers be familiar with the details of this technique of teaching second-language phonology'* (p.144)

Phonology

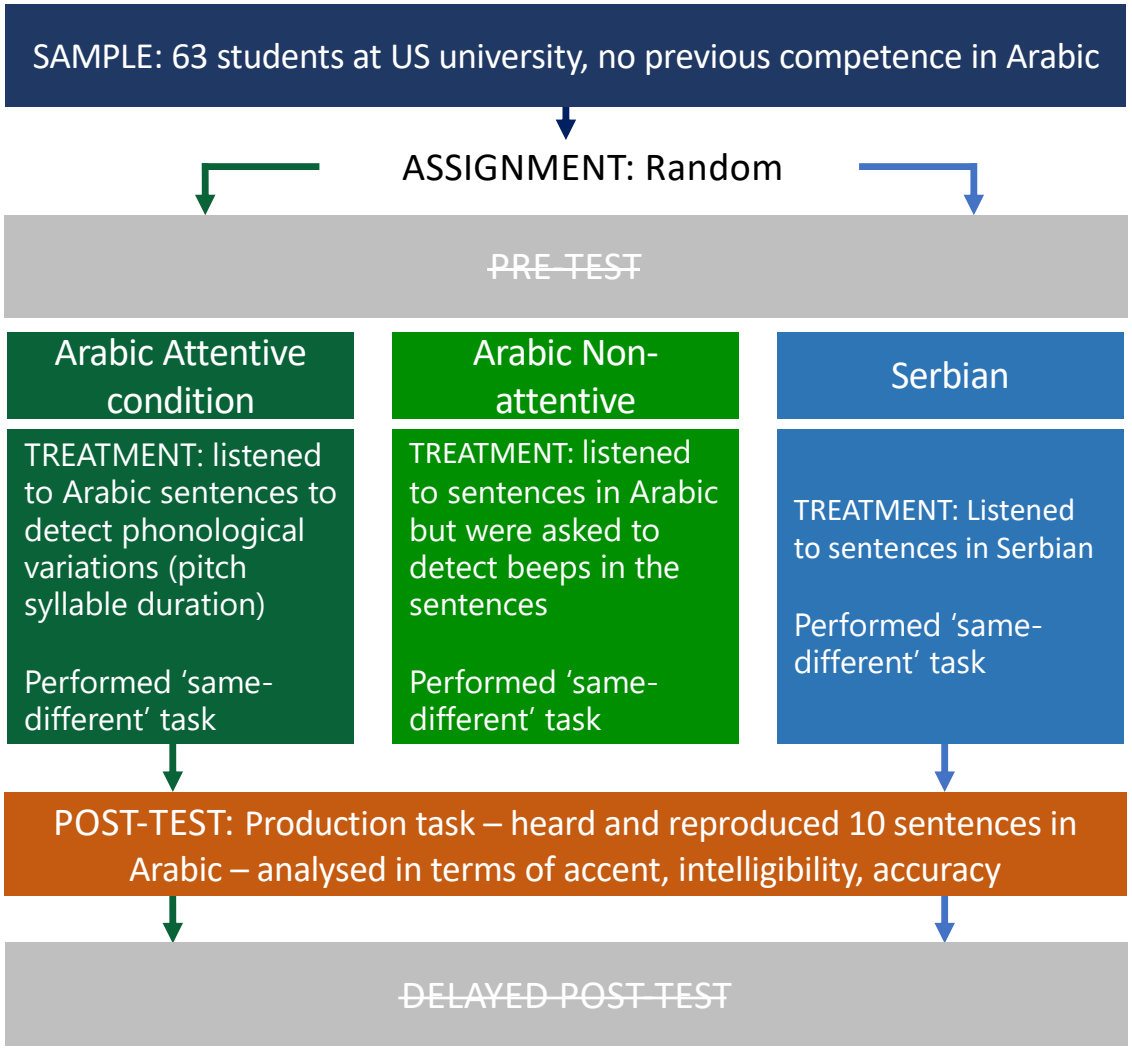
Study 6 (1993)

Strengths	Limitations
• Random assignment of participants • 5 weeks of treatment (5x a week) • Inclusion of pre-test and post-test • Tested letters in all word positions (beginning, middle, end)	• Small sample size • Differences between groups on pre-test scores • Varying levels of prior language exposure within groups • Lack on information on statistical tests used • Issues with test scoring

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

Phonology

Study 7 (2020)



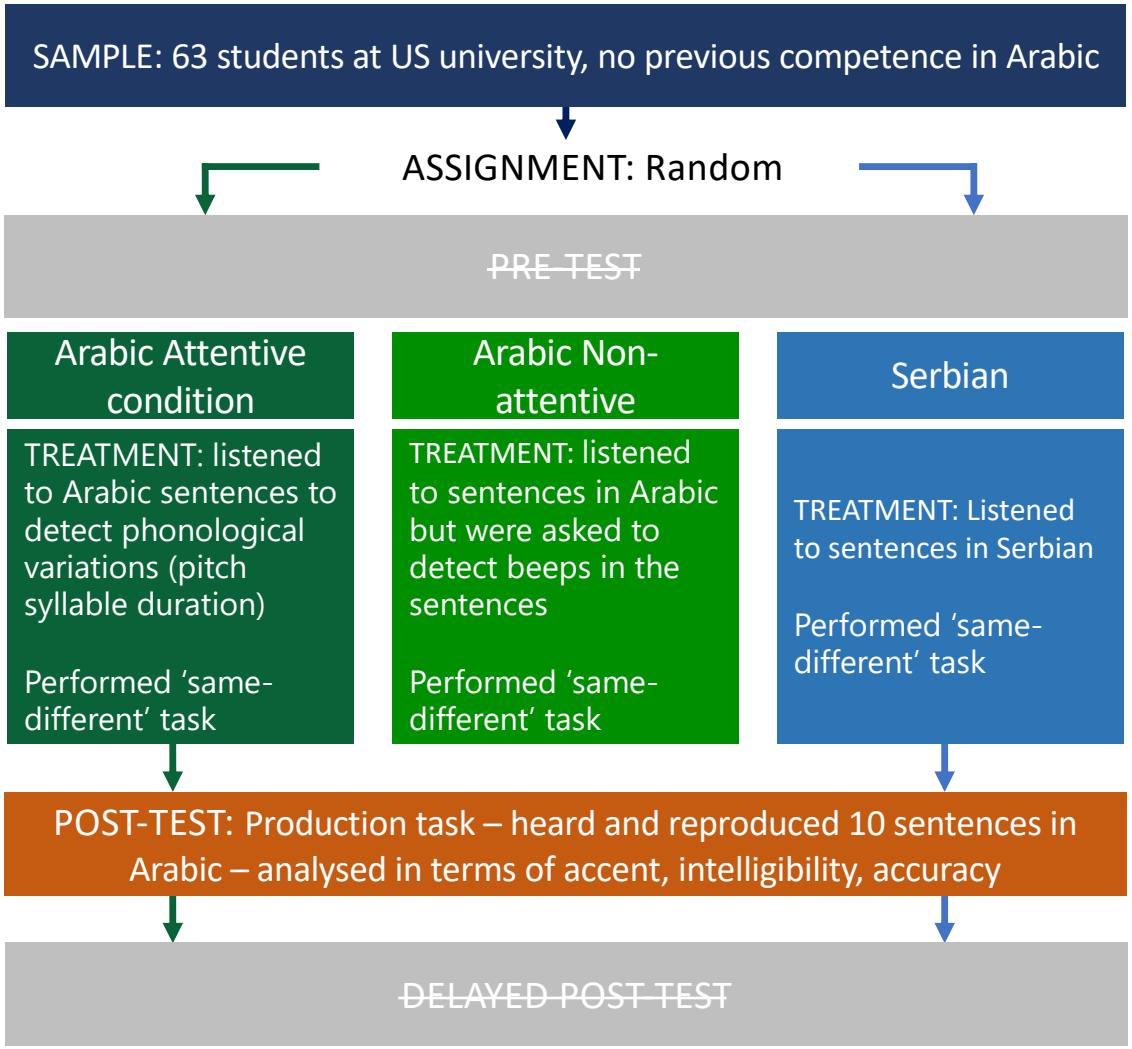
Study focus: Relationship between types of previous exposure and accuracy, accent and intelligibility of reproduction (+ relationship with musicality)

Findings:

- Participants in Arabic groups (x2) **outperformed** Serbian group in **intelligibility**
- 2 Arabic groups **did not differ**
- Previous exposure **did not** have an influence on the amount of **accent** or on the amount of **syllabic errors** committed
- Intelligibility, accent and syllabic accuracy of reproduced sentences **markedly improved** during course of the productive task

Phonology

Study 7 (2020)



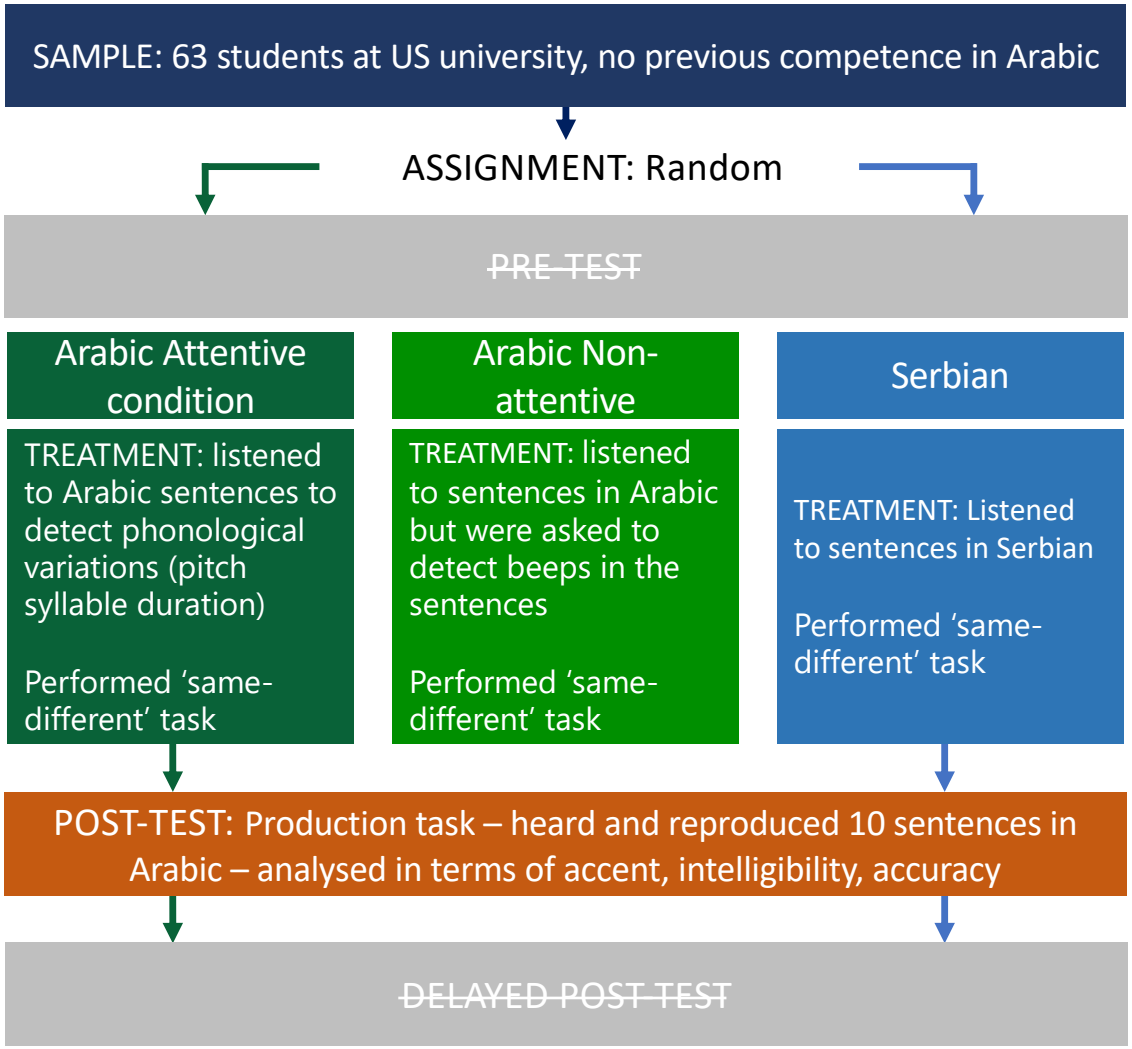
Study focus: Relationship between types of previous exposure and accuracy, accent and intelligibility of reproduction (+ relationship with musicality)

Findings cont.:

- **Musicality**: improvement observed in intelligibility and syllabic accuracy significantly **modulated by musicality** of the subjects - those with high musicality showed greater improvement than those with low musicality in later reproductions

Phonology

Study 7 (2020)



Implications:

'previous exposure to the language is a beneficial factor for the production of more intelligible sentences' regardless of focus on phonology (p.7)

'musicality can be a beneficial factor in the acquisition of productive skills in a second language even in the very first stages of L2 acquisition' (p.8)

Phonology

Study 7 (2020)

Strengths	Limitations
• Random assignment of participants • Good description of procedure • Statistical analyses between groups conducted	• No real control group • Low inter-rater scores on some variables • No participant numbers per group • Doesn't test L2 acquisition but reproduction of sounds • Limited application to pedagogy

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

CLAIMS & IMPLICATIONS

Study 1	*'study provided **empirical evidence in support of both** the traditional form-based as well as the communicative pronunciation teaching approaches'*	★☆☆☆
Study 2	*'constructivist student-centred technology-based pedagogy which has been shown to […] **competently deliver similar, if not better, student learning outcomes**.'*	☆☆☆☆
Study 3*	*'speech analysis training […] **should be adopted** to teach intelligible pronunciation, alongside traditional techniques and other technologies'*	★☆☆☆
Study 4	*'The technology method is **beneficial to L2 learners of Arabic in different proficiency levels and language groups**.'*	★☆☆☆
Study 5	*'findings of this study provide **strong support** for recommending the inclusion of phonetics and phonology components in second language instruction'*	★☆☆☆
Study 6*	*FRI is relatively effective in sound production and recognition, it seems desirable that teachers be familiar with the details of this technique of teaching second-language phonology'*	★☆☆☆
Study 7	*'results […] support the hypothesis that **musicality can be a beneficial factor in the acquisition of productive skills** in a second language even in the very first stages of L2 acquisition'*	★☆☆☆

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DISCUSSION

Studies provide:

- **insights** into challenges facing learners in pronunciation
- **ideas** for pedagogical approaches

Transparency is needed:

Specification of Arabic variety in speaking studies is vital in research

- MSA, regional varieties, classical Arabic?

DISCUSSION

What is the **target** of pronunciation instruction?

- Intelligibility? Comprehensibility? 'Correctness' – what does this mean?
  - What constitutes 'correct' pronunciation? When is pronunciation 'wrong'?
    - *tajwīd;* regional norms; 'native speakers'?
    - Who decides?

- Determined by context, learner motivations, and researcher language ideology

- Implications for standardized / national assessments
  - ACFTL (OPI); GCSE
  - Explicit guidelines needed (otherwise subjective)

OTHER SPEAKING STUDIES

OTHER SPEAKING STUDIES

Study 1* **(Palestine)**	2023	Utilizing remote speaking tasks for tackling foreign language anxiety	*Anxiety + online learning*	Journal article
Study 2 **(Saudi)**	2023	The Effect of Role-Play on the Development of Dialogue Skills among Learners of Arabic as a Second Language	*Role-play on dialogue skills*	Journal article
Study 3 **(USA)**	2019 a	Salience in the noticing and production of L2 Arabic forms	*Future forms (Levantine)*	Journal article
Study 4 **(USA)**	2019 b	The relationship of language anxiety with noticing and oral production of L2 forms: A study of beginning learners of Arabic	*Anxiety + Future forms (Levantine)*	Journal article
Study 5 **(USA)**	2008	The Effect of Class Size Reduction on Foreign Language Learning: A Case Study	*Class size*	Journal article

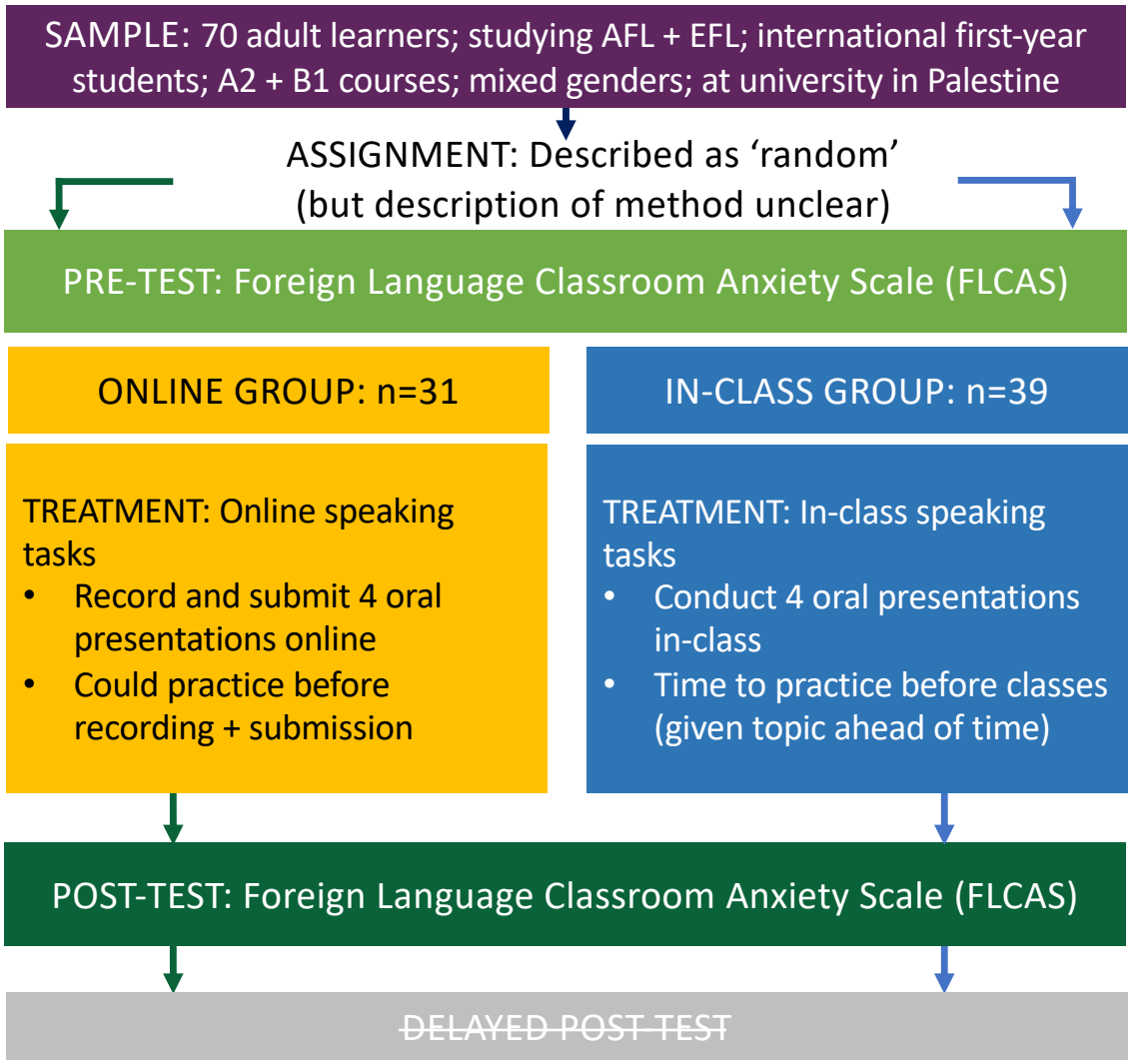
Speaking

Study 1 (2023)

Study focus: Impact of online speaking tasks v. in-class oral presentations on speaking anxiety

Findings:

- **Teaching technique explained 32.9% of the variance in students' speaking anxiety**
- Online speaking tasks (technique) decreased students' speaking anxiety in the experimental group



Speaking

Study 1 (2023)

Strengths	Limitations
• Larger group sizes • Use of validated instrument (FLCAS) • Inclusion of pre-test + post-test • Range of statistical analyses conducted	• AFL/EFL – who was studying? Unbalanced treatment sizes • Unclear group allocation • Unclear treatment timeframe • Unclear intervention description (e.g., who delivered instruction?)

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

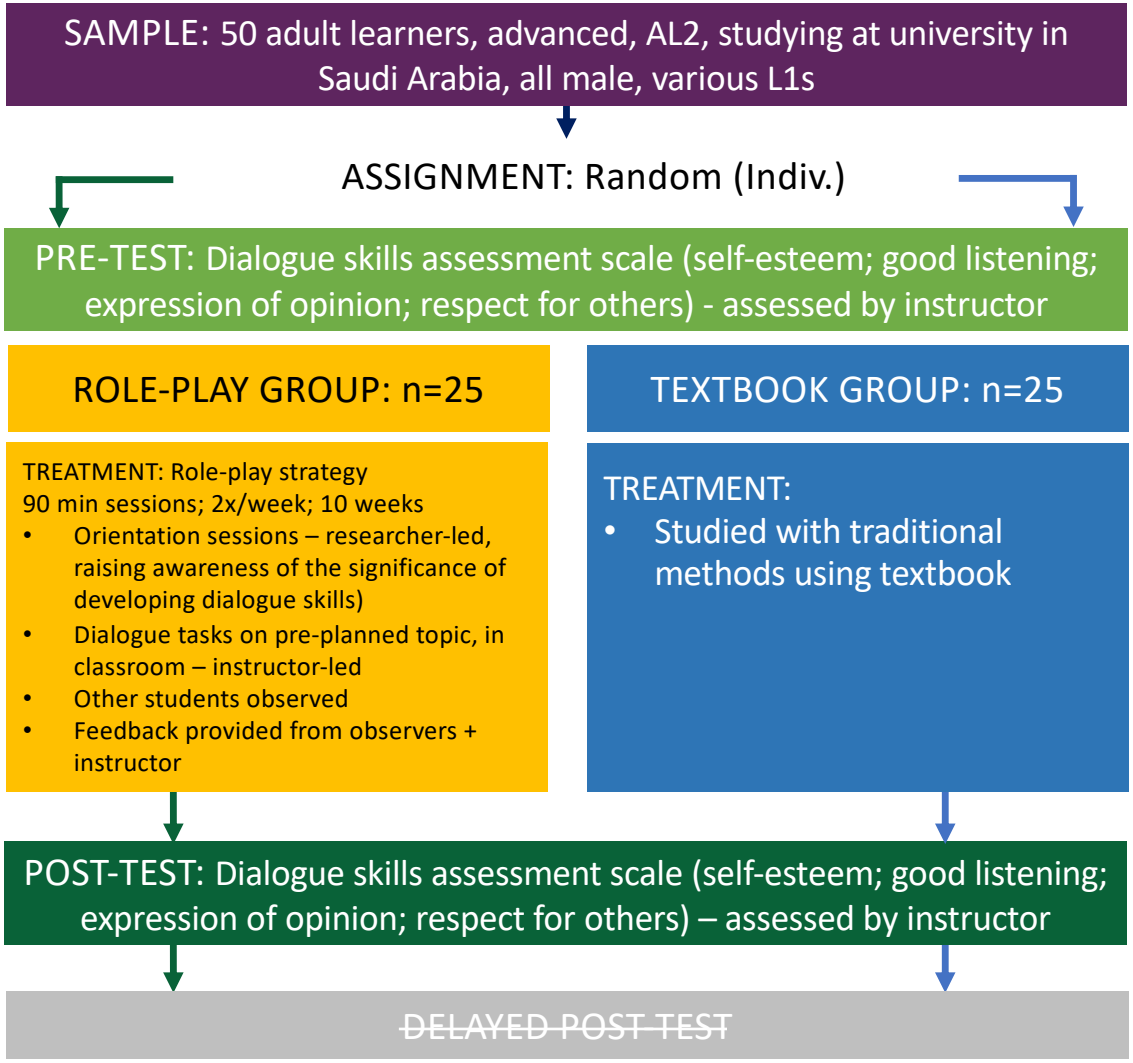
Speaking

Study 2 (2023)

Study focus: Effect of role-play strategy on development of dialogue skills

Findings:

- Significant increase in test scores for role-play group between pre- + post-test
- Role-play group significantly outperformed textbook group in post-test



Speaking

Study 2 (2023)

Strengths	Limitations
• Random assignment to groups • Innovative role-play treatment • 10 weeks of treatment • Statistical analyses conducted	• All male sample • No information on participant L1s • Little description of control group • No info on application of scale (inter-rating?)

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

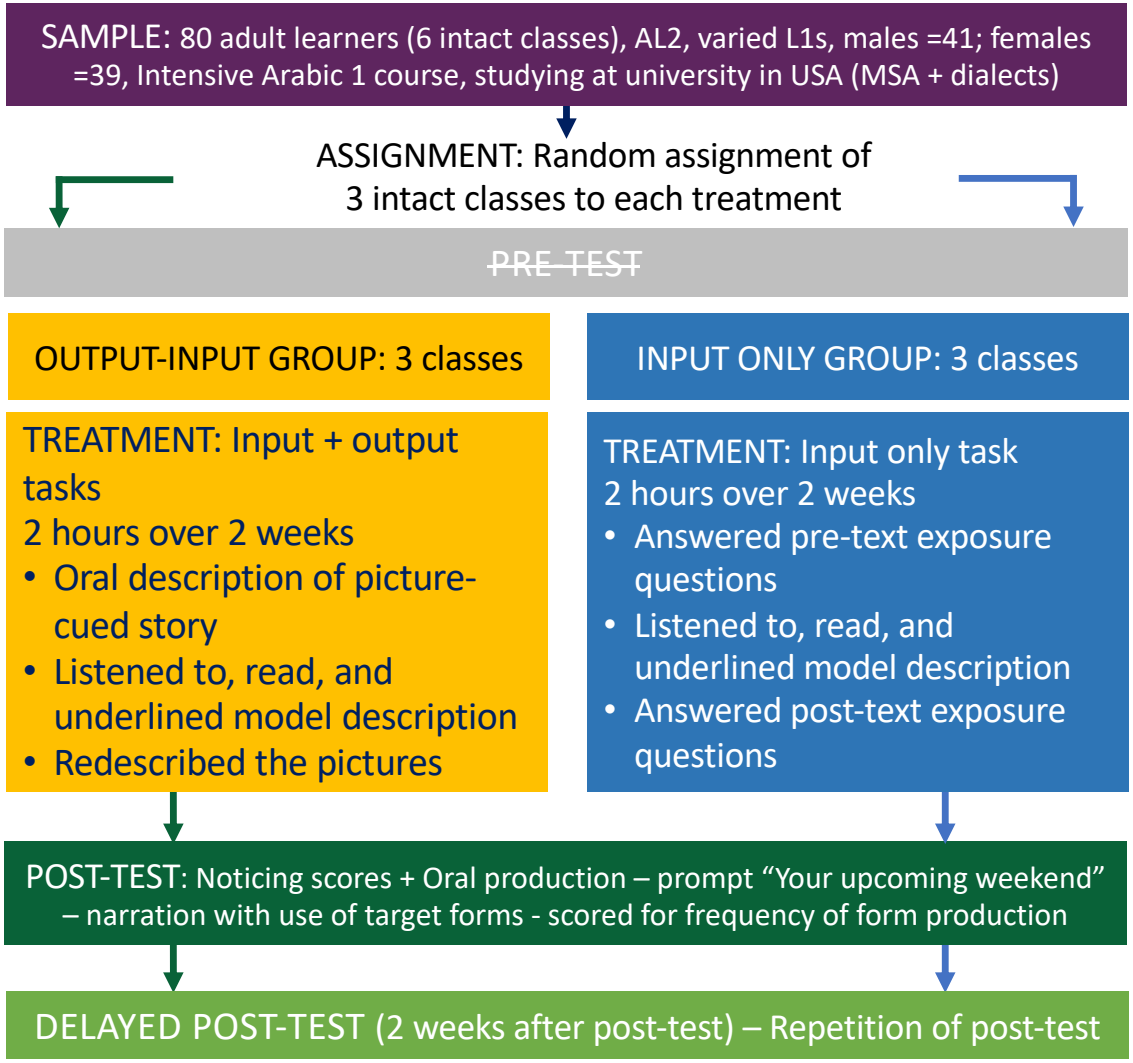
Speaking

Study 3 (2019a)

Study focus: Effect of task type (output-input v. input only) on noticing + production of grammatical forms (Levantine Arabic)

Target forms:

- future tense prefix (ح)
- time telling (X الساعة)
- time connectors (بعدين + بعد هيك)



Speaking

Study 3 (2019a)

Findings:

Noticing

- Output-input did not play a stronger role than input-only in promoting learner noticing of L2 forms

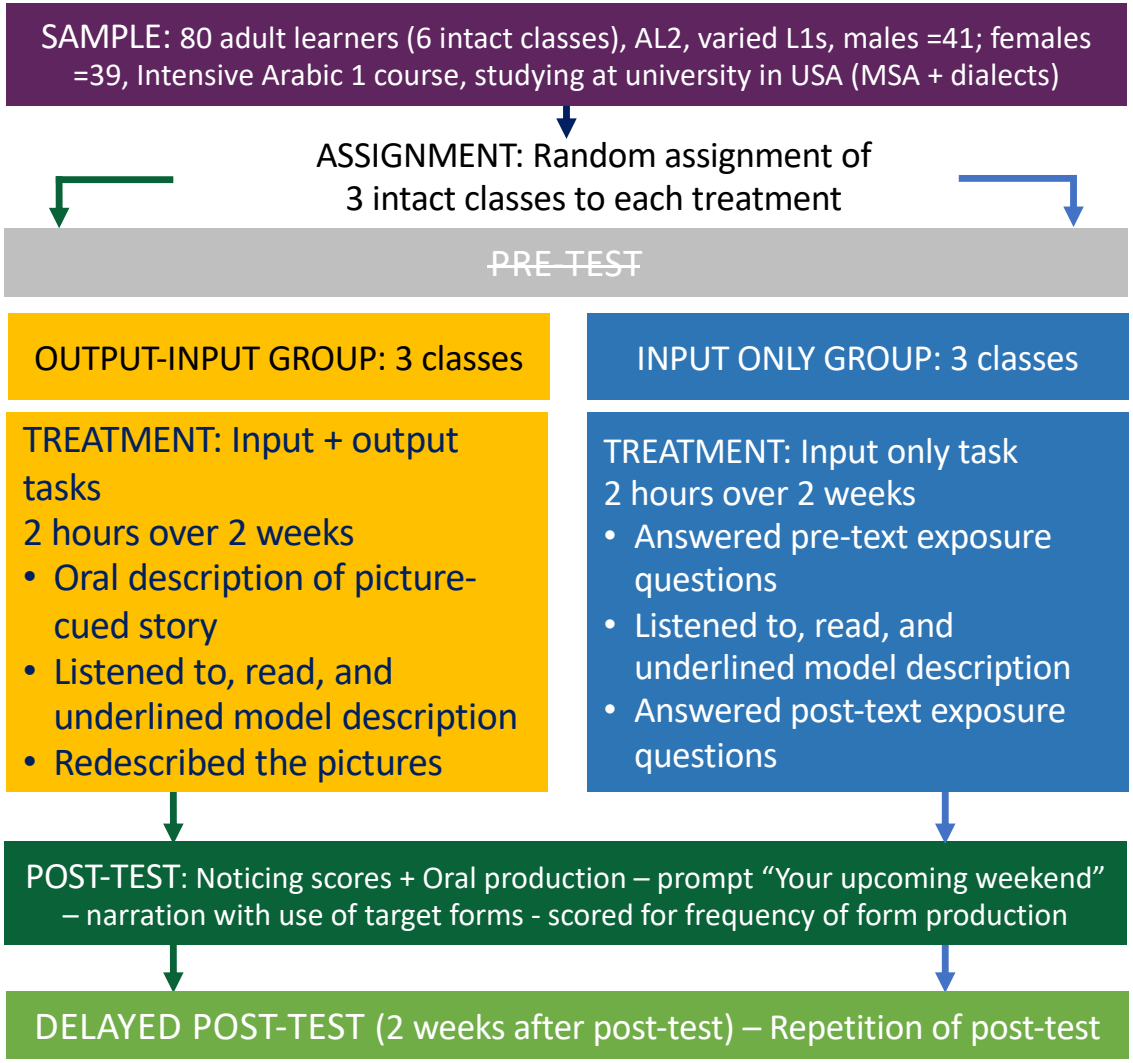
Production

Post-test

- Overall: no difference between groups
- **Future tense + time connectors: Output > Input**
- Time telling: No difference

Delayed Post-test

- **Time connectors: Output > Input**
- No other differences



Speaking

Study 3 (2019a)

Strengths	Limitations
• Focus on Levantine Arabic • Inclusion of delayed post-test • Range of statistical analyses conducted	• Participants clustered in groups • No pre-test • Issues with test foci – future forms compete with each other (e.g., no need for future indicator if using time phrase) • Different instructors per section • Scoring methods unclear

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

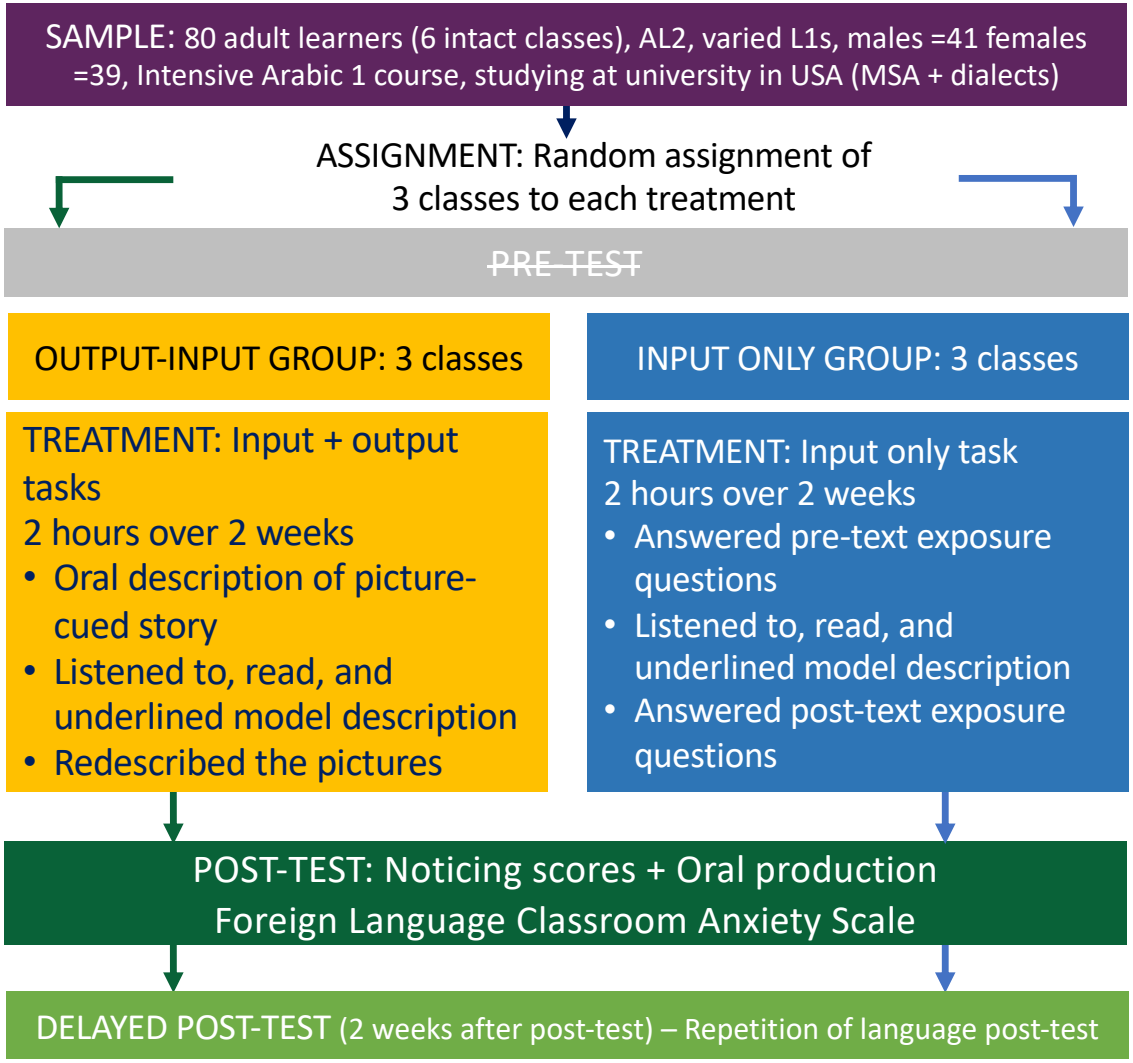
Speaking

Study 4 (2019b)

Study focus: Interaction between task type (output-input v. input only), noticing + production of grammatical forms (Levantine Arabic), and anxiety

Findings:

- **Significant positive correlations between form noticing + production**
- **FLA predicted use of target language forms across both groups**
- No advantage for either group in terms of form use



Speaking

Study 4 (2019b)

Strengths	Limitations
• Use of validated instrument (FLCAS) • Focus on Levantine Arabic • Inclusion of delayed post-test • Range of statistical analyses conducted	• No pre-test • Issues with test foci – features compete with each other (e.g., no need for future indicator if using time phrase) • Different instructors per section • Scoring methods unclear

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

Speaking

Study 5 (2008)

Study focus: Effect of reduced class size on oral proficiency developments

Findings:

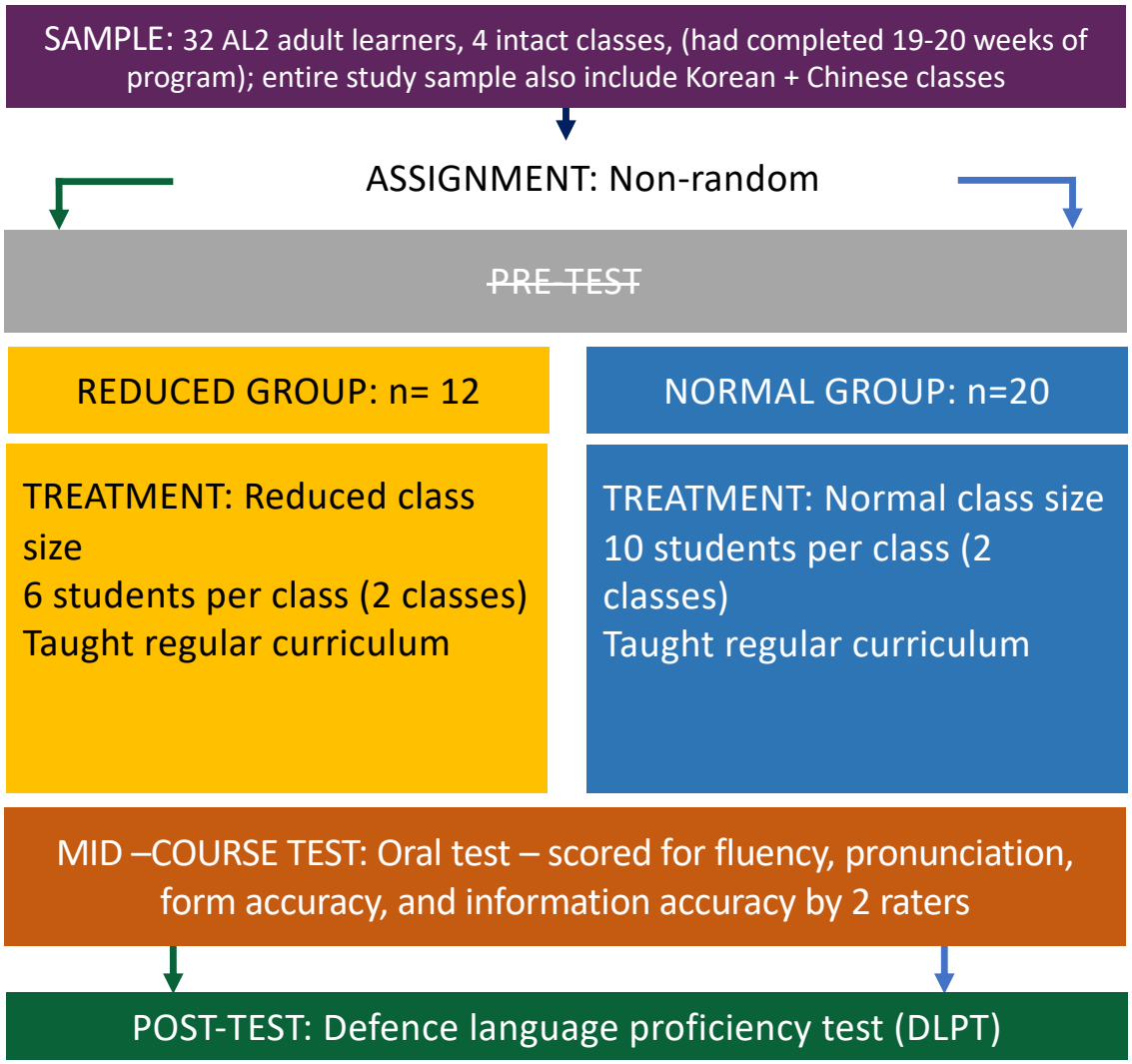
Mid-course test:

- No significant differences between groups overall
- Significant difference in pronunciation and information accuracy (DLPT measure)

Post-test:

- Reduced class-size performed significantly better in speaking assessment

Results **not** broken down by language



Speaking

Study 5 (2008)

Strengths	Limitations
• Inclusion of post-test • Clear identification of treatment (reduction in class size) • Statistical analyses conducted	• Multiple languages studied • Different instructors per group • No pre-test • No information on nature of instruction • No information on score calculation

Evaluation: ★☆☆☆

CLAIMS & IMPLICATIONS

Study 1	*'teachers of foreign languages are **urged to blend online speaking tasks into teaching**, as this technique was beneficial for decreasing students' level of anxiety and for providing off-defensive learning environments'* (p.10)	★☆☆☆
Study 2	*'The results […] emphasize **the need to introduce role-play** as an effective method for enhancing dialogue skills since the traditional methods do not have any significant role in improving dialogue skills.'* (p.8)	★☆☆☆
Study 3	*'The findings **suggest** the consideration of form salience in instructional practice as well as of individual variation and learners' internally created salience.'* (p.451)	★☆☆☆
Study 4	*'some level of FLA may not be as debilitating as traditionally thought. […] A positive L2 learning environment ensuring more facilitative than debilitative FLA levels **would seem to be key** in this endeavour.'* (p.314)	★☆☆☆
Study 5	*'[reduced class size] environment is beneficial for foreign language learning. The class sizes involved in this study are clearly much smaller than the class sizes most educational institutions can afford […] **no reason to believe that the effects should not also extend** to reductions of a similar scale in larger classes.'* (p.1101)	★☆☆☆

CONCLUSIONS

- **Experimental studies**
  - seen by some as the 'gold standard' for informing practice
  - rare in AL2 speaking

- Compared to the 'gold standard' ideal, the scope and scale of the available experimental studies is low.
  - This doesn't mean that they are without value –
  - But it limits the kinds of claims that can be made
    - Cannot draw implications for AL2 teaching more widely
    - Can give ideas for practitioners to try out and evaluate in their own classrooms

- Scope/scale of studies a result of **access to resources** (large sample, literature, infrastructure, support, time)
- Practitioner research can be valuable - part of a research-engaged approach to teaching.

DISCUSSION

- AL2 teachers can also draw on the wider literature on speaking development
  - What is universal in L2 speaking development and what is language-specific?
  - To what extent are SLA theories (derived largely from research on English L2) applicable to Arabic?

- Several of the studies looked at teaching phonology
  - What should be the **target** of pronunciation instruction? What counts as 'correct'?
    - Which variety?
    - Should learners aim for 'native-like' or intelligibility?
    - May depend on learners' motivations

TAKEAWAYS

- **Awareness** of current experimental research on speaking in AL2
- **Building blocks** for strong studies
- **Tools** for critical analysis of findings
- **Ideas** for future studies

DON'T FORGET

Oxford Collaboration for Arabic Research Priority Setting Survey

Please complete before **6.30pm** today

https://oxfordeducation.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7TB0BBoSIehX0wK

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