Pronunciation Teaching and Learning:
Effects of Explicit Phonetic Instruction in the L2 Classroom

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Research Questions

- Does **short-term, explicit** pronunciation Instruction increase comprehensibility more than non-explicit instruction?
- Does instruction in **suprasegmental** features increase comprehensibility more than Instruction in **segmental** features?

Previous studies

* **Non-native pronunciation** affects all domains of L2 phonology (segmentals and suprasegmentals)
  * Results in foreign accent
  * Affects comprehensibility and intelligibility
* Debate whether suprasegmental deviations are more detrimental to foreign accent or intelligibility than segmental deviations (Anderson-Hsieh et al, 1992; Munro & Derwing 1995).
* **Teaching of L2 pronunciation** trends towards communicative framework (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Hinkel 2006)
  * Sometimes perceived as in conflict with explicit pronunciation instruction
  * Yet some argue that explicit instruction yields larger benefits (Lord, 2005)
* **Influence of research findings on instruction is minimal** (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 1999)
* Only few studies examined L2 classroom contexts to test how to apply laboratory findings to pronunciation instruction (e.g. Derwing, Munro & Wiebe, 1998)

Pre and Posttest

- Delayed Sentence-Repetition Task (Trofimovich & Baker, 2006)
- Learners were audio-recorded individually before and after the treatment

Participants
- 4 participants in each group, who did pre– and posttest; Got the full training; Produced 24 sentences correctly
- Total: 12 English learners and 4 English native speakers

Comprehensibility Ratings
- Obtained from 12 native speakers
- 9-point Likert Scale (Derwing & Munro, 1997)
  - 1 = *extremely easy to understand*   9 = *impossible to understand*
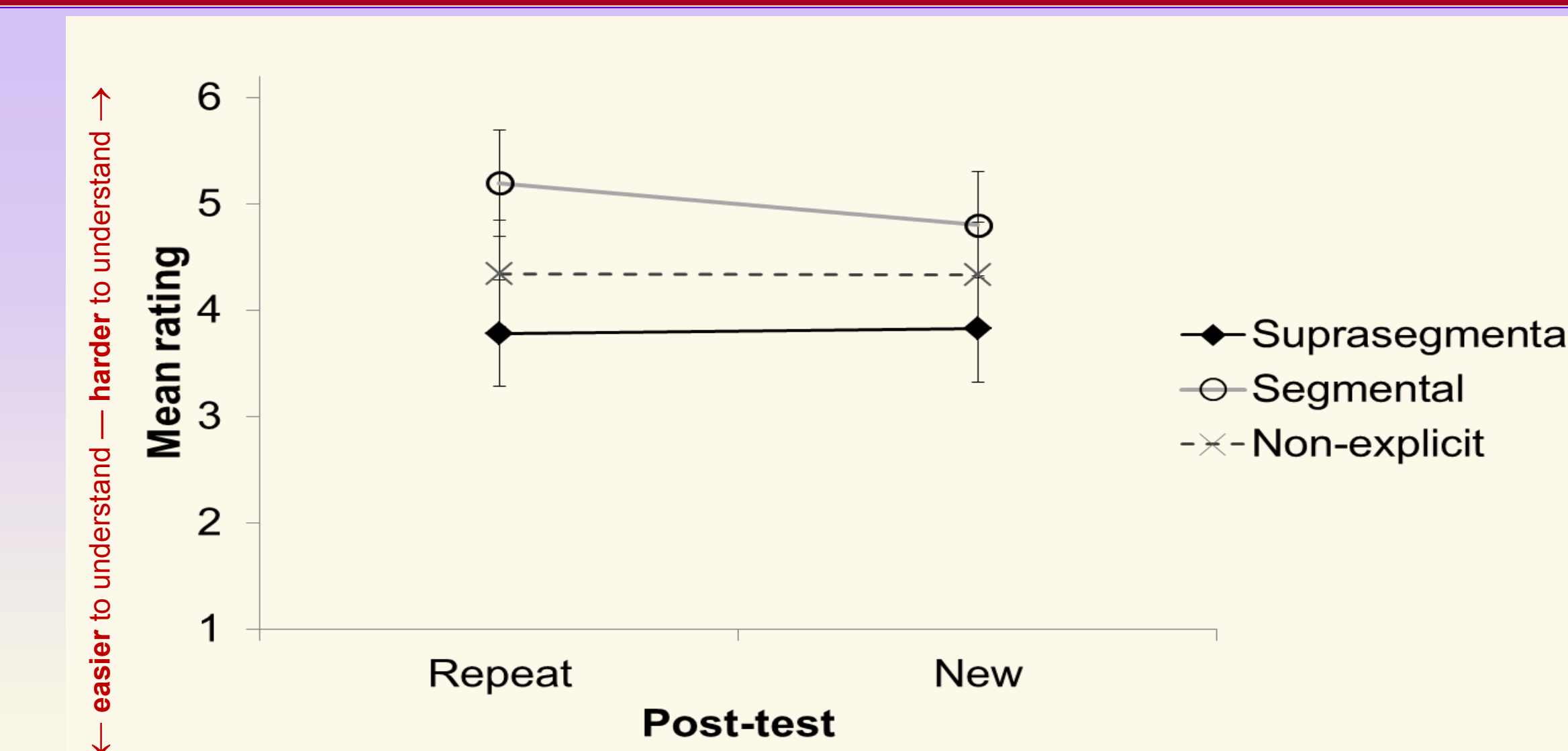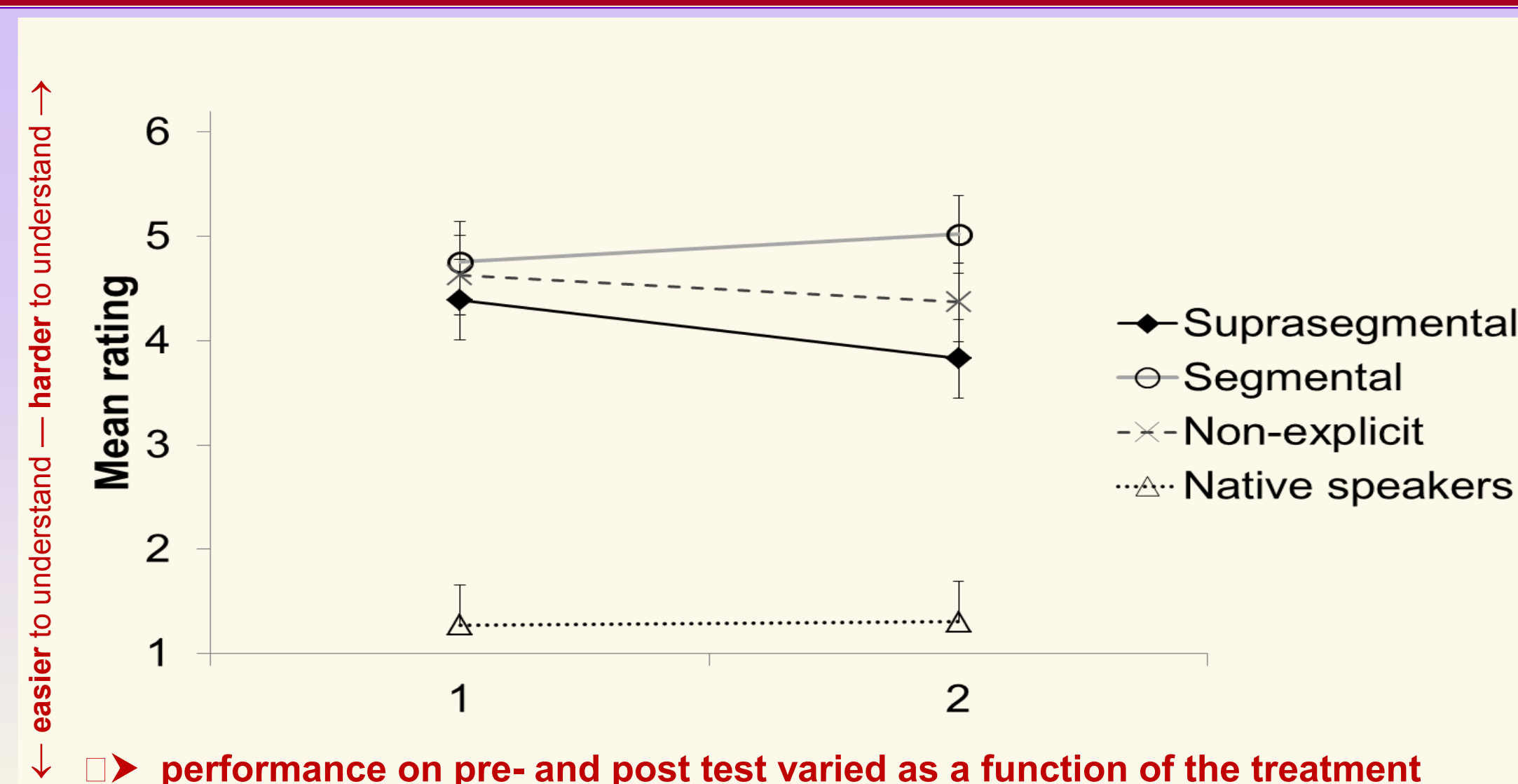
Stimuli
- Sentences were the same for all groups
  - **Example:** He was **i**n the l[ae]b wor**ki**ng
- Pre-test = 24 sentences;
- Post-test= 48 sentences
  - 24 sentences (same as pre-test)
  - 24 new sentences (to verify improvement)
- Selected for analysis: 24 sentences per participant (8 pre + 16 post) that were correctly produced

Instruction

(3 weeks: 75 minutes per week, over 3 days (total : 225 min. of instruction)

Stages and Techniques	Class 1 (n=12) Suprasegmentals	Class 2 (n=8) Segmentals	Class 3 (n=10) Non-explicit
Presentation Visual aids Oral introduction of topic	Explicit instruction and analysis	Explicit instruction and analysis	Non-explicit instruction; pronunciation practice announced
Guided Practice Bottom-up skills, Analysis Recognition & Discrimination Minimal pair drills Reading short passages	**Rhythm, Stress & reduction, Linking, Intonation**	**Vowels /i, ɪ, æ, ɛ/ and articulation Vowel contrasts Minimal pairs**	Classroom drills on words, sentences and phrases; combination of the same materials as other groups
Production Top-down skills; Fluency activities	Communicative tasks : Pair discussion; Group discussion; Role plays; Information gap activities		

Quantitative Results

Figure 1: Effect of treatment
Learners only:
- Marginal improvement from pre- to post: p = .072
- Group difference : p> .2   **BUT STRONG INTERACTION** between test and group: p< .001

Mean Rating	M	SD
Pretest	4.4	0.18
Posttest	4.2	0.57

Figure 2: Repeat vs. New sentences
Post-test: No difference in ratings between „new" and „repeat" sentences

- no effect of *repeat vs. new* (F(1, 12.8) < 1, *p* > .6)

Qualitative Results (see handout)

- Experimental groups were similar in terms of explicit feedback
- More vocabulary explanations occurred in the control & segmental groups
- Overall, explicit analysis of materials was more complex and global in the suprasegmental group, and more limited in the segmental group
- Such differences may account for the ratings, but more controlled research is needed

Conclusions

- **Explicit phonetic instruction benefits L2 learners overall,** but differences in treatment yield different outcomes (i.e. segmental group became *less* comprehensible)
- **Explicit suprasegmental instruction yields rapid improvement in comprehensibility**, but qualitative analysis together with comprehensibility ratings reveal complex interactions of instructional focus and teacher implementation (i.e. explanation and feedback practices)