

Learners' preference for and  
opinions about integrated and  
isolated form-focused instruction

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# Outline of Presentation

- Definitions of Isolated and Integrated FFI
- Support for both approaches
- Research Questions
- Questionnaire Study
- Feedback Study
- Conclusions

# Teaching and Research

- Consensus: Instruction is most effective if it includes attention to both form and meaning
- Less agreement: When is it most effective to draw learners' attention to form?

# Integrated and Isolated Instruction

## Integrated FFI

- Primary focus on meaning
- Attention to form always embedded in meaning-based and communicative practice
- Attention to form planned and reactive

## Isolated FFI

- Primary focus on form
- Attention to form always separate from meaning-based and communicative practice
- Attention to form planned and reactive

# Why isolate?

- Traditional presentation/practice pedagogy

*A “natural” way to teach*

- Humans are limited capacity processors

*You can't pay attention to everything at once*

- Motivation

*No interruption of communicative interaction*

## In support of isolated FFI

“ ... communicative activities are an essential component of a language curriculum but there is still a place for a separate analytic language syllabus”

Stern, 1992

## In support of isolated FFI

“We [should] teach grammar separately, making no attempt to integrate it with the task-based component”

Ellis, 2002



# Empirical support for isolation

- Input processing studies (VanPatten, 1991, 2004)
- Skill-learning studies (DeKeyser, 1994, 2003)

# Why integrate?

- Efficiency
  - *2 for 1*
- Motivation
  - *Knowing help is available*

## In support of integration

“Grammar should never be taught as an end in itself but always with reference to meaning, social factors or discourse - or a combination of these factors”

Celce-Murcia, 1991

## In support of integration

“...teachers should not prevent learners ... from combining a concern with language use with worry about formal accuracy in terms of specific language items...”

Brumfit, 1984

# Theoretical support for integration

- Long (1996) Revised interaction hypothesis
  - *Negotiation for meaning; implicit feedback on form*
- Lyster (1998) Negotiation of form
  - *Explicit feedback on form within interaction*
- Swain & Lapkin (2002) Meta-talk/collaborative dialogue
  - *Explicit reflection on form within communicative language use*

# Theoretical support for integration

- Learners can focus their attention on form when they are engaged in communicative interaction
- This is helpful for second language development and learning

# Empirical support for integration

## Research in Communicative Classrooms

- Intensive ESL (Lightbown & Spada, 1994; Spada, White & Lightbown, 2005)
- French immersion (Harley, 1998; Lyster, 1994, 2003)
- Other communicative and content-based classroom research with adolescent and adult L2 learners (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2001)

# Intensive ESL

- Learners in highly communicative classrooms
- Exclusive focus on meaning in most classes
- Learners whose teachers drew their attention to form within their communicative activities were more accurate (and equally fluent) as learners who completed the same activities but without attention to language forms.



## However...

- No studies have directly compared outcomes for students receiving isolated versus integrated form-focused instruction.
- No research has investigated whether there are different benefits that come with both types of instruction.

# Transfer Appropriate Processing

- We retrieve knowledge best in contexts that are similar to those in which we originally acquired it (Blaxton, 1989)
- The greater the similarity between the processing types that were activated when we learned something and those engaged in our later attempts to retrieve it, the greater the likelihood of quick and accurate retrieval

# TAP predictions for L2 learning

- L2 knowledge learned in isolated activities will not be easily retrieved in communicative situations
- L2 knowledge learned during integrated activities will be more easily retrieved in communicative situations

# Research Questions

- Does integrated FFI affect L2 learning differently from isolated FFI?
- Are different language features more easily learned via integrated or isolated FFI?
- What are learners' (and teachers') beliefs about integrated and isolated FFI?

# Two studies

- Questionnaire Study
- Feedback Study

# Questionnaire Study

Student Questionnaire: 20 items – 10 isolated  
and 10 integrated

- *I find it easier to learn grammar when the instructor teaches it by itself (Iso)*
- *I can learn grammar while reading or listening to a passage (Int)*

# Questionnaire Study

- Teacher Questionnaire: Burgess & Etherington (2002)
- 11 isolated and integrated items
  - *Grammar is best taught through work which focuses on message. (Int)*
  - *Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual structures. (Iso)*

# Participants

*Community-based ESL program*

210 students and 33 teachers

*University EAP program*

104 students and 11 teachers

Total: 314 students and 44 teachers



# Programs

## *Community-based ESL*

- settlement focus
- topic based
- publicly funded

## *University EAP*

- academic focus
- skills based
- privately funded

# Participants' Profile

## Students

- 18 to 55 years of age
- Intermediate level of proficiency
- EAP: Korean, Chinese & Japanese
- Community: Spanish, Chinese, and other languages

## Teachers

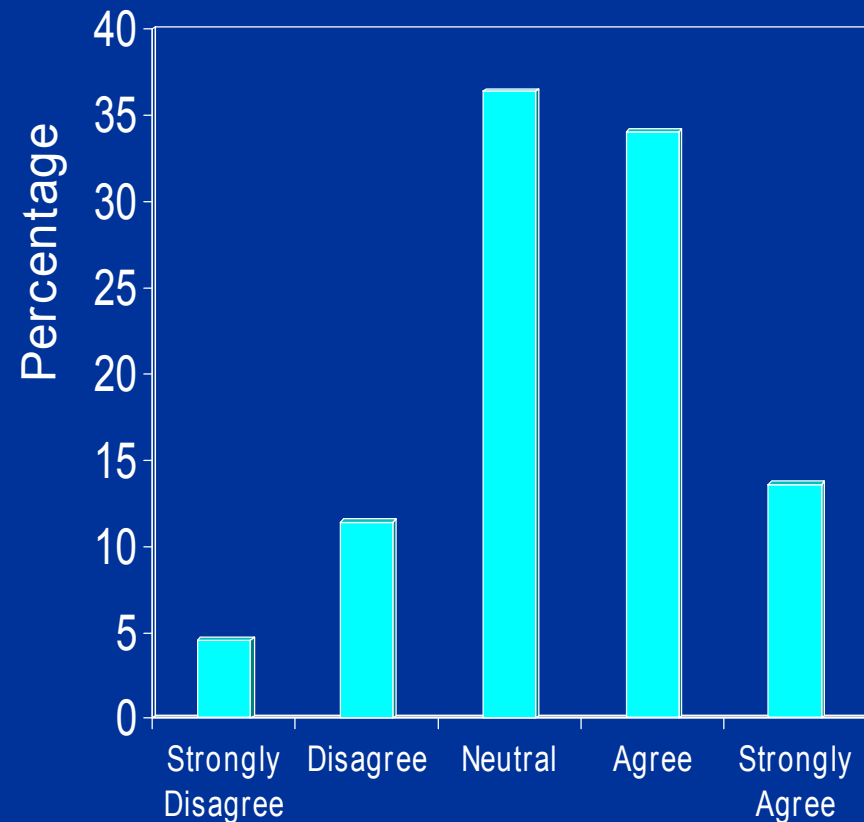
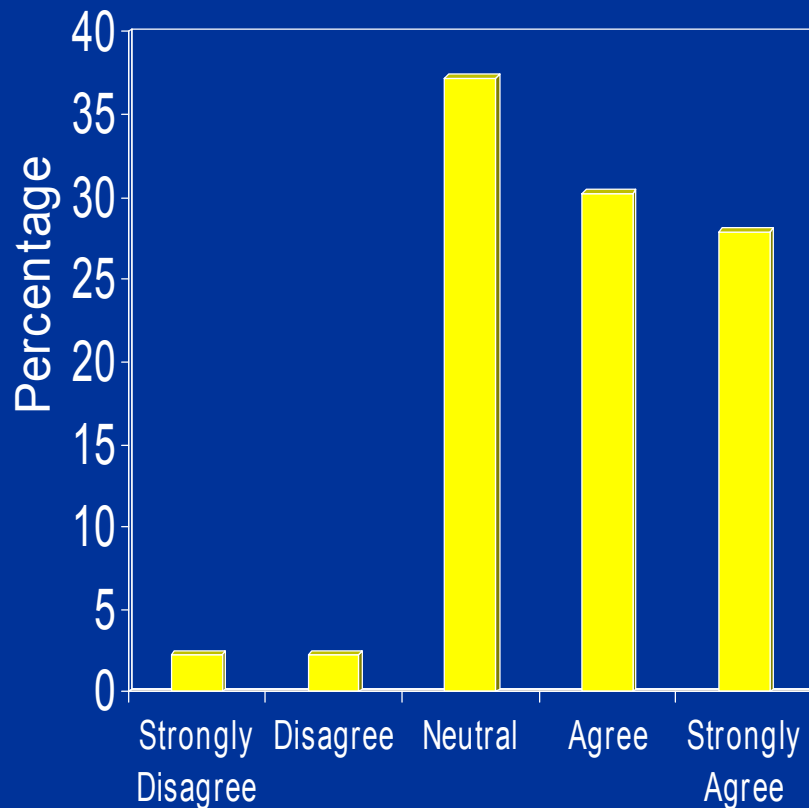
- Female
- Over 40
- North American or Eastern European in origin
- B.A. and Certificate in TESL
- Over 10 yrs teaching experience

What are your preferences for  
isolated and integrated FFI?

# Results – Teacher Questionnaire

INT- Grammar is best taught through work which focuses on message

ISO – Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual structures.

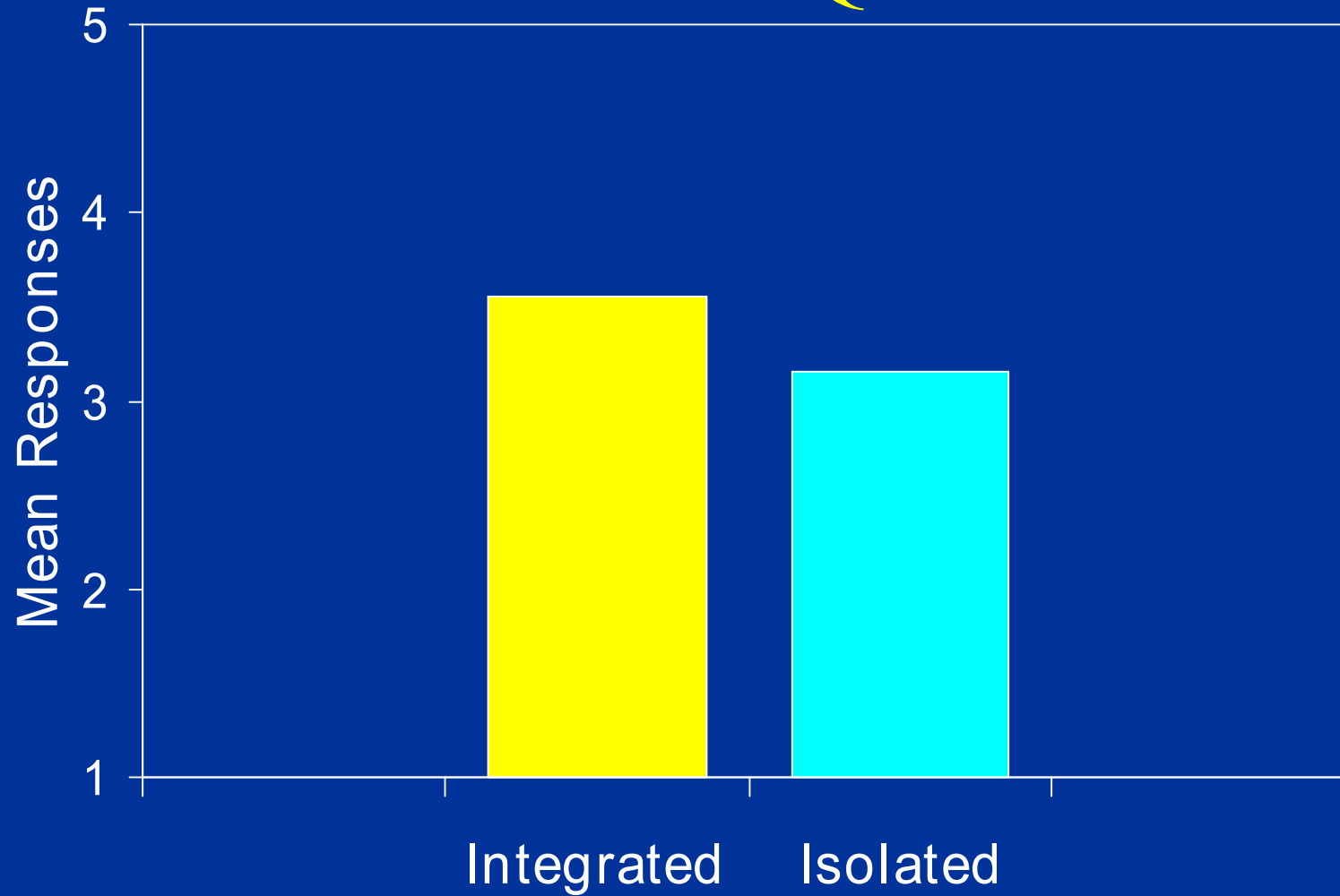


## Results – Teacher Questionnaire

“...an awareness of the need for communicative practice of grammar, yet also an understanding of a need for focus on form at some stage of the learning process”

*(Burgess and Etherington, 2002, p. 27)*

# Results – Teacher Questionnaire

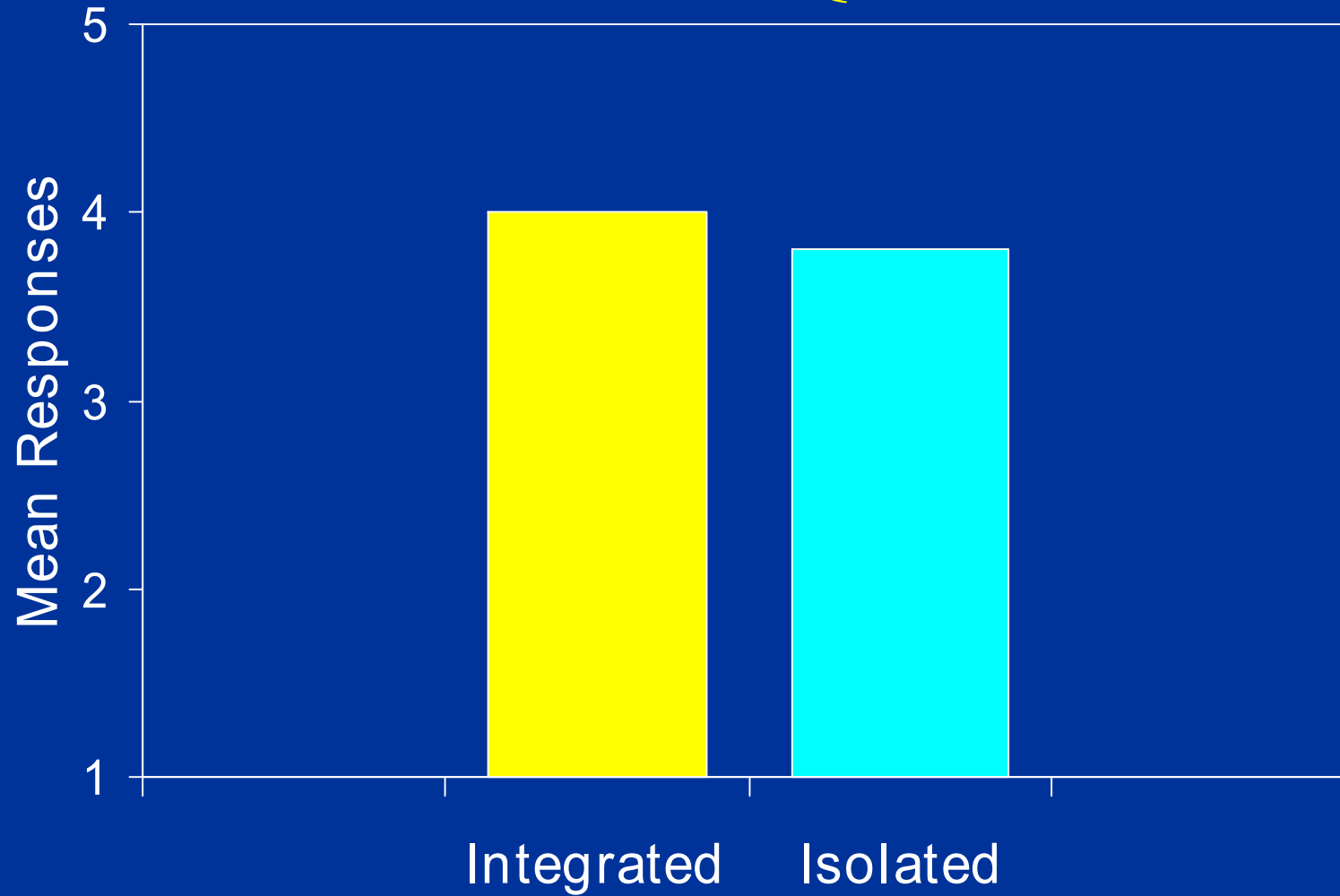


# Results – Teacher Questionnaire

ISO - Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual structures.

*“ At lower levels of instruction – building on previously learned material (structures) seems to work.”*

# Results - Student Questionnaire





# Results - Student Questionnaire

- *“When we achieve a certain level of English, the matter is not about knowing a grammar point, [but] about how much you can use it.”*
- *“In China...we did lots of exercises and had many tests, but I don't think it's the best way.”*

# Results - Student Questionnaire

- No differences
  - Proficiency
  - LI
  - Program

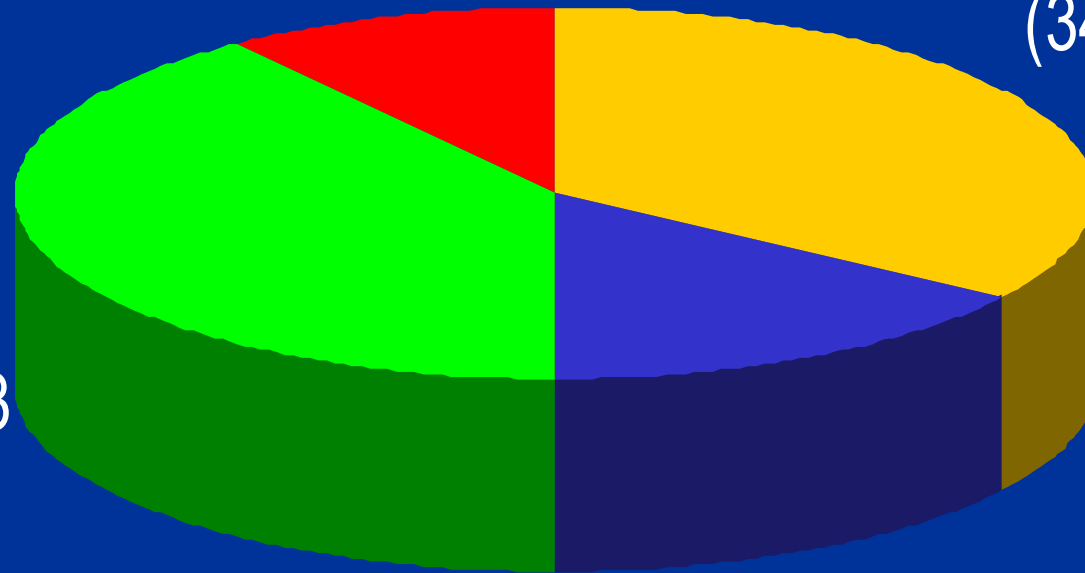
# Cluster Analysis

■ Cluster 4  
 $n=29$   
(10%)

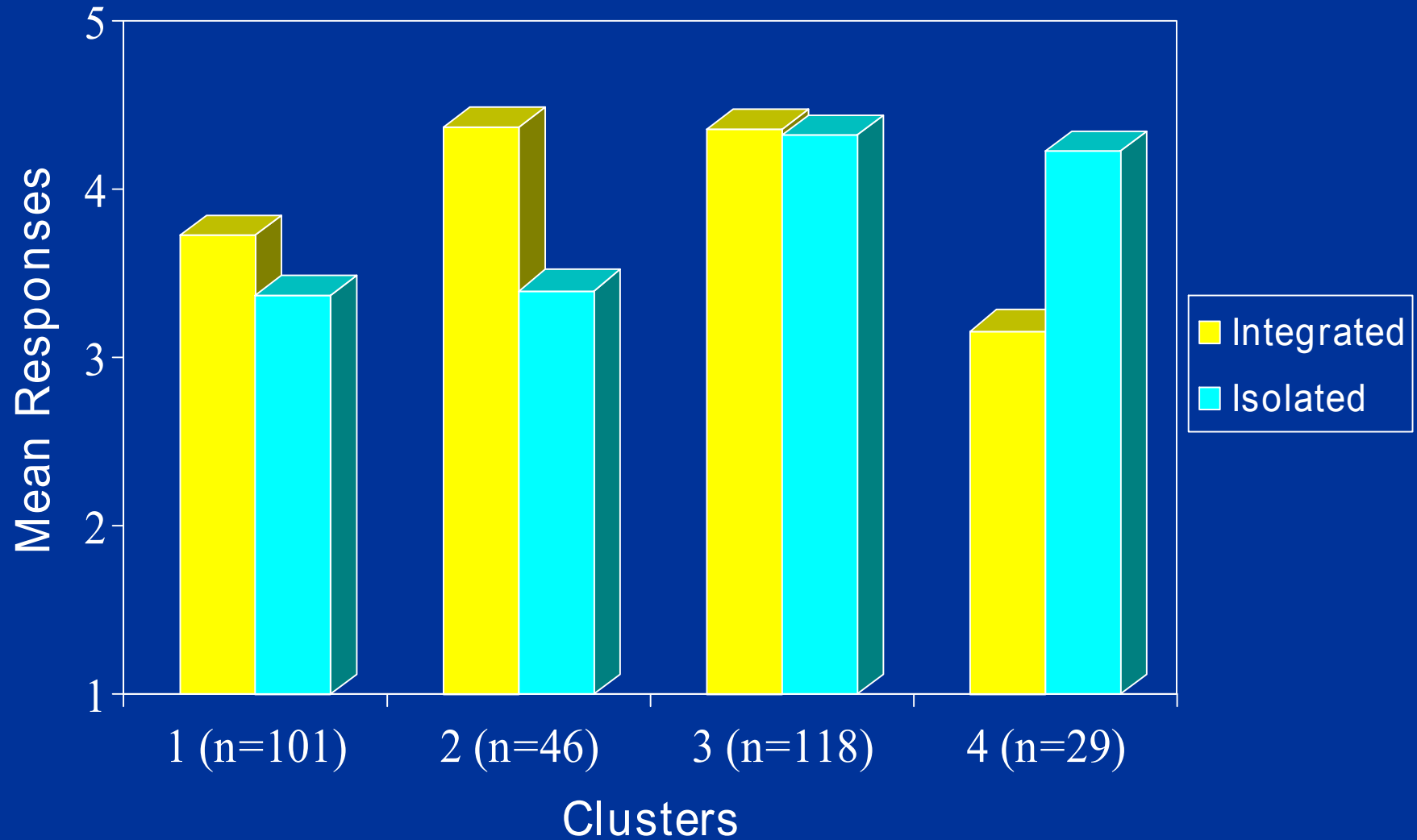
■ Cluster 1  
 $n=101$   
(34%)

■ Cluster 3  
 $n=118$   
(40%)

■ Cluster 2  
 $n=46$   
(16%)



# Cluster Analysis



# Feedback Study

- 102 students
- 8 teachers
- Two versions of a 2-hour instructional unit on the passive construction
- Teacher and student feedback questionnaire immediately after the lessons

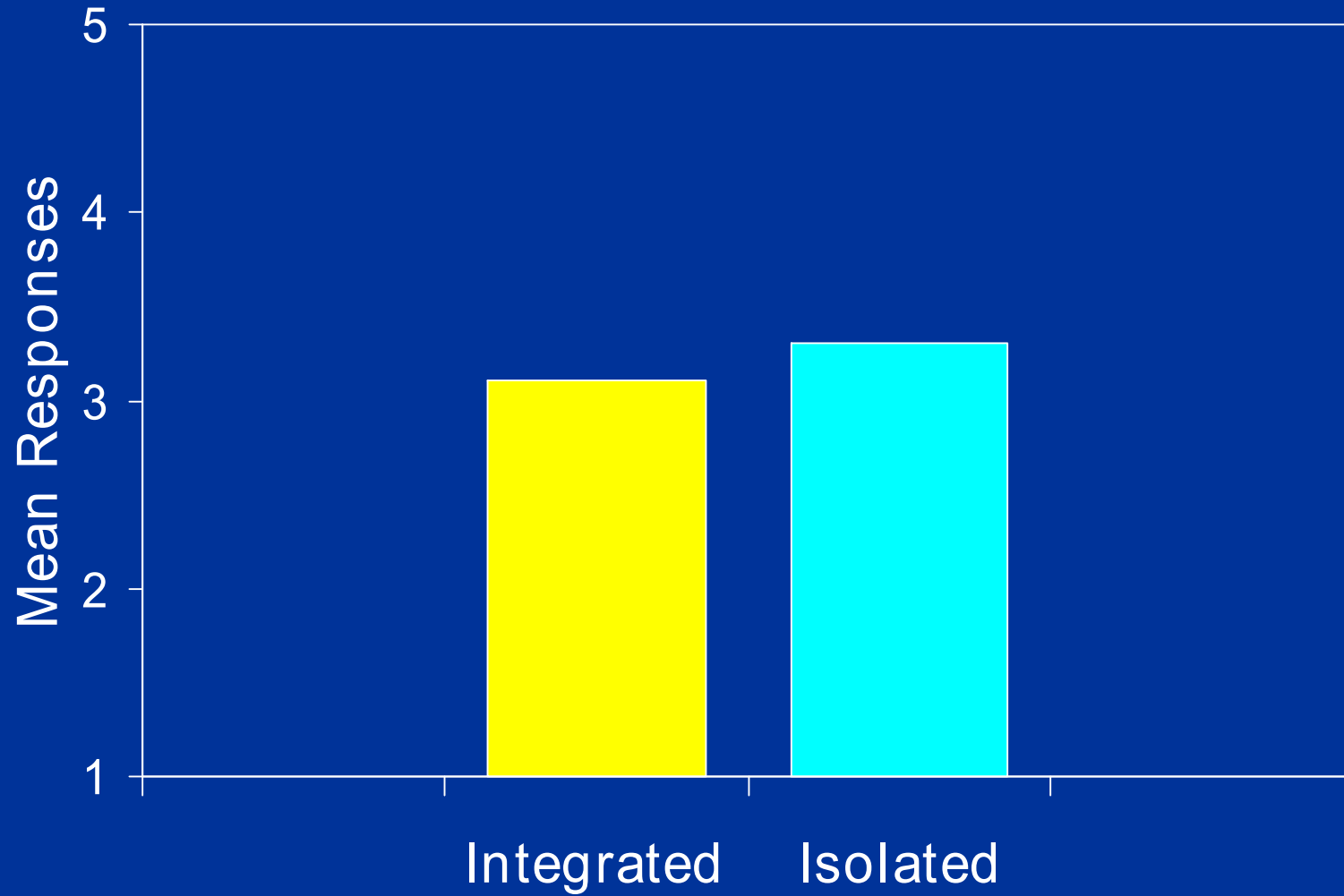
## Student items

- I received enough instruction on passives in this lesson.
- I had enough opportunity to practice passives in this lesson.
- I enjoyed the way grammar was taught in this lesson.

## Teacher items

- I believe my students received enough instruction on passives in this lesson.
- I believe my students had enough opportunity to practice passives in this lesson.
- I enjoyed teaching passives in this way.

# Teacher feedback

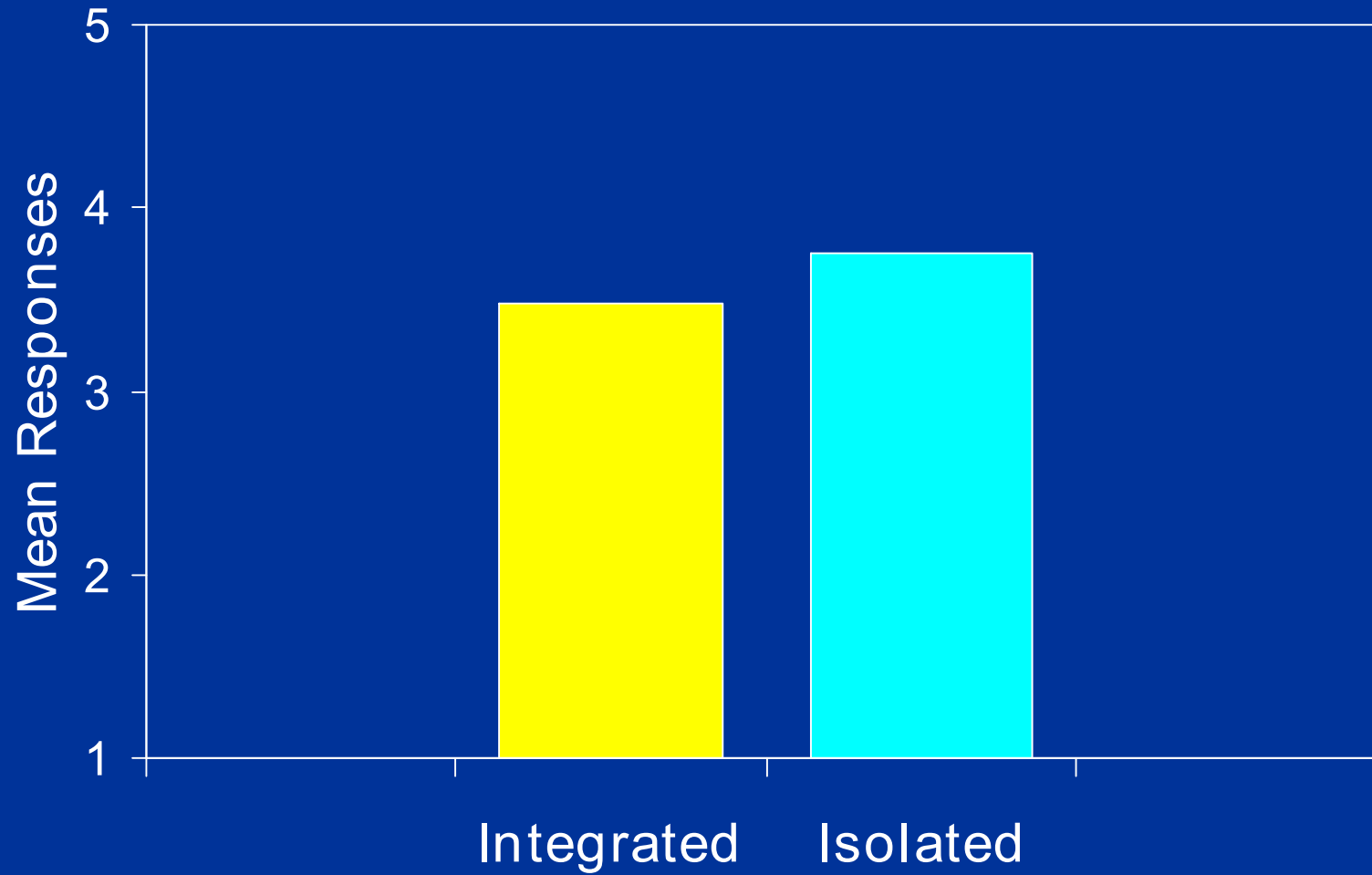


# Teacher feedback

- “I believe the most effective teaching comes from a blend of elements from both the integrated and the isolated. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive; they are, in fact quite compatible.”



# Student Feedback



# Student feedback

“I believe that even though grammar is not very attractive or interesting, it is useful, because [it] can make the difference between people in future works, interviews etc.”

- “I could concentrate to study grammar with reading because the topic of reading was interesting. I didn’t like grammar because it’s so boring and complicated, but this time, I could enjoy learning grammar.”

# Overall Results: Questionnaire and Feedback Study

- Teachers and students value both integrated and isolated FFI
- No significant differences between questionnaire and feedback study

# Ongoing Research

- What are the effects of integrated and isolated FFI on L2 learning?
  - Are they equally effective?
  - Are there certain advantages for one over the other in terms of learning outcomes?

*Thank you!*

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