

Reconceptualizing Grammar Instruction: A Sociocultural Perspective on EFL Learners’ Development of Non-Finite Verb Concepts

Abstract

This study reports a mixed-method case study, which investigates the impacts of concept-based language instruction (C-BLI) on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners’ conceptual development of grammatical concepts. We specifically center on non-finite verbs learning (i.e., gerunds and present participles) within an English descriptive classroom context. In this study, we conducted a five-week quasi-experimental intervention in a southeastern Chinese high school. Participants were 20 first-year EFL students, who were divided into two groups, i.e., the experimental group (n=10) and the control group (n=10). The experimental group was administered the C-BLI, while the control group followed the presentation-practice-production (PPP) instructional approach. We collected participants’ descriptive writing samples during the pre- and post-test sessions. Six participants from the experimental group voluntarily participated in one-on-one online interview sessions after the intervention. Results from the quantitative perspective showed that the experimental group participants outperformed the control group regarding their grammatical accuracy and writing proficiency. Qualitative findings further revealed and explicated students’ positive perceptions toward C-BLI, as it could support learners’ metalinguistic awareness and build a sense of “control over” the grammatical concepts during their learning process. We also found that the customized design and use of Lego-based Schemas for a Complete Orienting Basis of Actions (SCOBAs) embedded in the writing activities could further mediate learners’ conceptual understanding of the non-finite verbs. Future research directions and pedagogical implications of using C-BLI to support EFL students’ grammatical conceptual development will be discussed in this session.