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学位論文要旨

Part I: Theoretical Background

Historically, the grammar-translation method has been widely used to teach English in Japan. The main objective of English education was originally to obtain knowledge from other countries through reading books published in English. However, as the communicative approach emerged in the 1970s (Hymes, 1972; Halliday, 1975; Widdowson, 1978), EFL education in Japan began to shift toward communicative language teaching. Since that time, the grammar-translation method has coexisted in Japan's educational context with the gradually developing communicative approach. With greater concern given to communicative engagements and transactions, the concept of teaching grammar for communication has often been neglected in Japan, even after Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1991) stressed the importance of form-meaning-use mapping in second language (L2) acquisition.

Focus-on-form (FonF), as advocated by Long (1991), incorporates a methodology for integrating Larsen-Freeman's three-dimensional grammar framework of form, meaning, and use (1991). Norris and Ortega (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of the effectiveness of form-focused instruction (FFI) and formS-focused instruction (FFSI). The study stated that explicit types of instruction are more effective than implicit types, and that focus-on-form and focus-on-formS (FonFS) interventions result in equivalent and quantifiable effects. However, there is no consensus regarding the sustainability of either method of instruction.

In Japan, the quantity of research conducted on FFI is not very large. Notably, the results of only two FFI studies conducted in junior and senior high schools have been published. One study was conducted at a junior high school and the other at a senior high school, and both focused on a very small number of participants. Both report only qualitative data based on FFI classes.

Part II: Experiments

The current study investigates the effects of FFI and FFSI on the learning of two grammatical features by 10th grade students in a Japanese senior high school. This study compares the differential effects of FFI and FFSI. To assess the effects, three sets of production and grammar questions were used as pre-, immediate post-, and delayed post-tests.

Specifically, this paper examines the effectiveness of different approaches when teaching the subjective relative pronoun in Study 1 and past perfect tense in Study 2. As Study 1 was conducted as a pilot survey, the number of the participants was small for the FonF group (n = 13), the FonFS group (n = 12), and the control group (n = 13). Study 2 was carried out as the main survey, and thus the number of participants was larger for the FonF group (n = 69), the FonFS group (n = 66), and the control group (n = 23). In both studies, students were assigned to the FonF group, which used a problem-solving activity in a communicative context, the FonFS group, which received an explicit explanation of grammatical features, or the control group, which was taught using the grammar-translation method. These groups were essentially equivalent in level according to a CASEC test.

Results

During the experiment, the pretest resulted in similar outcomes for both the FonF and FonFS groups. The immediate post-test indicated a fairly considerable development of grammar in the FonFS group and an equal development of production in the FonF group. The delayed post-test indicated different evidence about these two groups. Specifically, the uptake of grammar was more successful and sustained in the FonF group. Study 1 and Study 2 yielded almost equivalent results. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) demonstrates a clear distinction between the FonF and the FonFS groups in the test scores for each test. The result indicates which method had a greater effect on the uptake of form by the learners. The p-values of the FonF group's production and grammar tests are both less than 0.05 ($p < .05$), indicating a statistically significant difference between the two experimental groups. Though the FonF and FonFS groups were not statistically different at the initial stage or immediately after the treatment, a significant difference appears in the production delayed post-test. That is, the FonFS group did not show long-lasting development after the treatment, whereas the FonF group developed stably and sustainably, as reflected in both production and grammar tests.

Part III: Discussion and Conclusions

Regarding form acquisition, FFI was more effective over the long term. FFSI positively impacts short-term memory. When reflecting on FFI research to date, there is no consensus that FFI has an advantage over FFSI concerning sustainability. For example, a number of studies indicate that the effect of grammar instruction does not last (Lightbown et al. 1980; Pienemann, 1984; White, 1991). However, this current research indicates that FFI results in marked sustainability of form, which leads to a productive effect.

Another effect demonstrates that learner-initiated focus-on-form encourages learners to directly fill the grammatical gaps between interlanguage and the native speakers' language. Still another effect is that FFI promotes the process of learning L2 in context. It can be said that the possibility of acquiring L2 through a natural process is strong because learners are naturally exposed to many linguistic resources while communicating with interlocutors. Consequently, this research indicates that FFI in a communicative context (Task-Based Language Teaching, etc.) promotes the learning of target forms, in this case, the subjective relative pronoun and the past perfect tense.

This study concludes that FFI has the potential to be of great value when implemented in the EFL environment in Japan. As EFL teachers typically depend on the grammar-translation method, naturally enough, EFL learners receive only limited English input. While the grammar-translation method has been in use for many years, it is not based on any theoretical foundations, nor is it sufficiently effective. Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that "there is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory" (p. 7). Developing an effective method to promote English learners' competence is an urgent need from an educational standpoint. This study implies that FFI may be a more effective approach than grammar translation for Japanese secondary schools.

Despite the numerous actual problems that may be found in individual classrooms, this type of instruction can be expected to motivate learners in a positive way and yield positive effects. Under the present curriculum in Japan, most secondary school English learners receive only a limited number of hours of instruction each week. Thus it is critical for there to be a strong possibility of integrating FonF and FonFS, which can be introduced at least partially into the curriculum.

Finally, the weak interface position of grammar acquisition serves as the underpinning of communicative English language teaching to convert explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge. Ellis (2006) notes that "explicit knowledge of a grammatical structure makes it more likely for learners to attend to the structure in the input and carry out the cognitive comparison between what they observe in the input and their own output" (p. 97).

These finding should be included when considering potential modifications to secondary school EFL teaching approaches in Japan.