Abstract
The role and importance of explicit grammar instruction (EGI) in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been a source of controversy in the last a few decades. Research that indicated the insufficiency of meaning-focused instruction has ignited a renewed interest in form-focused instruction to address the limitations of grammarless versions of CLT. However, there is a debate about how compatible the use of EGI in a communicative approach. As opposed to inner circle countries where EGI fell out of favor, research in Oman has shown that teachers strongly hold onto traditional grammar practices while paying little attention to CLT, although its implementation is demanded. It is of paramount importance, therefore, to understand the barriers to a successful combination of form-focused and meaning-focused instruction. Thus, this study sought to explore the perceptions of Omani students regarding the use and applicability of explicit grammar instruction in CLT, its impact on students' language proficiency, and its effectiveness in their language learning experience. A qualitative method to research was utilized to collect in-depth data and seek important insights. Participants were 23 college students who are studying English language teaching. The findings indicated that participants generally support the integration of EGI and do not believe that a moderate use of it would inhibit CLT implementation. They attributed the excessive use of EGI to other factors such as lack of time and resources, the demanding nature of CLT, and teachers' previous training in traditional grammar instruction. Moreover, participants expressed strong beliefs about the inadequacy of meaning-focused instruction in terms of helping students develop grammatical competence. They rather believe that it would more effective to combine both form-focused and meaning-oriented teaching. As for their learning experience, almost half of the participants indicated that a number of factors limited the effectiveness of EGI in their experience, such as the lack of communicative practice, teaching language structures without contextualization, and the lack of connectedness to the real world. Finally, participants preferred an inductive approach towards grammar instruction in CLT and indicated that learners should play a more active role in learning. The study has pedagogical implications for teachers and curriculum developers regarding the choice of an appropriate grammar model and suitable instructional options.
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