Raising Linguistic Awareness through Metalinguistic Written Corrective Feedback

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Abstract : Grammar has traditionally been taught for its own sake, emphasizing rules and drills. However, in recent years, more emphasis is given to communicative competence. Current research suggests that form-focused instruction is notably efficient when incorporated in a meaningful communicative context. It is maintained that writing tasks related to the students' academic fields will encourage them to express themselves openly in topics that are close to their hearts, without feeling too uneasy about grammatical forms. The teacher can further reduce students' apprehension of grammar by announcing that credit will be given for merely doing the task and that grammar mistakes will not affect the grade. Students' linguistic errors can then be corrected by giving metalinguistic feedback which involves providing learners with some kind of explicit remark about the nature of the errors they have made. Research has also shown that learners' developmental readiness is an important factor influencing the effectiveness of written corrective feedback. Larger effect sizes appear as the proficiency level is higher. The purposes of this paper are to demonstrate how grammar can be taught indirectly through writing tasks, and more specifically, how the use of metalinguistic written corrective feedback given to advanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students can raise their linguistic awareness. Since errors are not directly corrected, the students have to work out the corrections needed through exploring grammar books and websites. Longitudinal studies of metalinguistic written corrective feedback comparing the number of errors in students' first and fourth compositions have shown a decrease in errors.
Keywords : EFL, linguistic awareness, metalinguistic corrective feedback, teaching grammar through writing
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