

Children's metalinguistic explanations in collaborative interaction within a form-focused instructional grammar sequence

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Studies on L2 task-based interaction have demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative dialogue to raise young learners' awareness of language forms in foreign language (FL) settings, especially in collaborative writing tasks (Calzada & García Mayo, 2021a; Gallardo-del-Puerto & Martínez-Adrián, 2022; Luquin & García Mayo, 2021). Among these studies, only a few have discussed the elaboration of children's collaborative talk by way of the number of turns within their interactional episodes (Calzada & García Mayo, 2021b; Gallardo-del-Puerto & Martínez-Adrián, 2022), the construct of engagement (Azkarai & Kopinska, 2020; Calzada & García Mayo, 2020), and the presence of explanations (Gallardo-del-Puerto & Martínez-Adrián, 2022; Martínez-Adrián & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2021). Yet, none of these studies account for the nature of such explanations. The present research aims to address this issue by exploring the incidence and focus of child EFL learners' metalinguistic explanations, when performing form-focused tasks collaboratively within an instructional grammar sequence (IGS) about English modal verbs of obligation (i.e., *have to*, *must*, and *should*). Therefore, the study interrogates about the frequency of children's explanations therein, and the focus of these accounts (i.e., content, meaning, form, pragmatics). The IGS was implemented in two intact classes of 6th Primary schoolers (11-12 years old) with an A1-A2 proficiency level in English (Council of Europe, 2020) during 6 weeks. Children's explanations were analysed qualitatively considering certain typologies established in EFL interactional research with adults (García Mayo, 2002a; 2002b), and the different foci that the relevant literature distinguishes in their linguistic discussions (Azkarai & García Mayo, 2016; García-Mayo & Luquin, 2021; Leiser, 2004; Taguchi & Kim, 2016; Yang & Zhang, 2010). The quantitative analysis was based on descriptive statistics and specific statistical tests. Preliminary results indicate that the participating children offered a significant amount of metalinguistic explanations for their language choices, and that these interactional categories focused mainly on pragmatic aspects of the target language and content. The findings highlight the potential of IGS that include communicative and language awareness tasks to promote EFL child learners' awareness of form-meaning-function mappings regarding specific grammar targets and their usage in communication.