Beliefs About Grammar Instruction and the Mastery of the English Passive Voice

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Abstract Beliefs about second language learning and teaching have been shown to play an important role because they can impact the effectiveness of the instructional options used as well as the ultimate levels of attainment. This also applies to perceptions concerning the role of grammar as well as the ways in which it should be taught. While quite a few studies have focused upon learners' beliefs in this area, often in comparison with those manifested by teachers, there is a paucity of research which looks into the link between such beliefs and grammar attainment. The study reported in this chapter sought to fill this gap by investigating the link between the beliefs about grammar instruction held by 132 Polish university students majoring in English and their mastery of the passive in this language, operationalized as performance on measures of explicit and implicit knowledge of this structure, also taking into account its productive and receptive dimensions. The findings are complex and provide evidence for some positive links in this respect which are related to the ways in which grammar is taught and evaluated in the context under investigation.

1 Introduction

Beliefs about different aspects of learning and teaching a second and foreign language (L2) have been of considerable interest to second language acquisition (SLA) researchers ever since Horwitz (1985, 1988) introduced the construct into the field and developed her *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI), which focused on such general issues as the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, as well as motivation and expectations. The scope of research into beliefs about L2 learning was considerably extended in the following decades, with Wenden (1999),

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for example, linking them with metacognitive knowledge, Mori (1999) relating them to epistemological beliefs, and Kramsch (2003) conceptualizing them in terms of metaphors by means of which the process of L2 learning is described. A major shift can also be observed from viewing beliefs as predetermined, stable mental representations to regarding them as dynamic, inconsistent and not always compatible with the actions learners ultimately take (cf. Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). In addition, a distinction has been made between *explicit* and *implicit* beliefs, the latter of which have been referred to as *mindsets* (Dweck, 2012). Researchers have also started to pay attention to the emotional side of beliefs (e.g., Barcelos, 2015). Irrespective of such changes in the way in which the construct has been conceptualized, there is certainly still much truth to Dörnyei's (2005, p. 216) comment that "(…) the beliefs language learners hold considerably affect the way they go about mastering the L2." It should thus come as no surprise that numerous studies have been conducted that have looked into learners' and teachers' beliefs about different facets of L2 learning, such as the learning of particular skills and subsystems (e.g., pronunciation, see Pawlak et al., 2015), content-based instruction (e.g., Briggs et al., 2018), classroom experiences (e.g., Nilsson, 2020) or the use of the mother tongue (e.g., Wach & Monroy, 2019), to name but a few. Beliefs about grammar instruction (GI) and correction of grammar errors are certainly no exception. However, very few studies have explored the relationship between such beliefs and L2 grammar attainment and, to the best knowledge of the present author, none has related them to the use of a specific grammar structure, surely not with respect to explicit and implicit knowledge of this structure. The study reported in this chapter aims to fill this gap by investigating the link between beliefs about different aspects of GI and the mastery of the English passive voice in terms of the productive and receptive dimensions of its explicit and implicit representation.

2 Mastery of L2 Grammar

When asked about the essence of the mastery of L2 grammar, most people would probably just point to the familiarity with relevant rules and the ability to apply them, presumably in controlled exercises and on different kinds of tests. However, the situation is more complex than that for at least two crucial reasons. First, as has long been shown in the literature, the knowledge of TL grammar is multi-faceted, not only because of the long-standing traditional distinction between syntax or morphology but also interfaces between grammar and lexis (cf. Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2020). Second, as Larsen-Freeman (2003) argues, the mastery of any grammatical structure has to be considered with respect to its form, meaning, and use. Specifically, in her view, learners do not only need to get to know how a particular structure is created but also what its use indicates in semantic and pragmatic terms, that is, the message its employment conveys and the circumstances in which communication takes place. Third, there is also the crucial distinction between *explicit* and *implicit knowledge* of L2 grammar (cf. e.g., Ellis, 2009; Pawlak, 2019). The former is conscious, declarative, available for self-report and to a large extent independent of

limitations related to age and developmental sequences, but it can only be drawn upon when learners have sufficient time to recall the relevant rules they have been taught. By contrast, the latter is tacit and procedural, it cannot be verbalized, it is subject to constraints stemming from age and the ability to perform requisite processing operations (Pienemann & Lenzing, 2015), but it can be accessed rapidly in real-time processing required by communicative interaction. When we think about the English passive which is the focus of the study reported below, it is one thing to know the rules governing how it is formed, what we mean by using it and what message we want to get across by choosing this structure, that is, having explicit knowledge that we can deploy in controlled exercises or on tests, and quite another to be able to use the different form of this TL structure in the right way in spontaneous communication, which requires implicit knowledge. One important qualification, however, is that it is difficult to talk about purely implicit knowledge in settings where learners may have little everyday access to the TL and where instruction starts with explicit provision of rules, as is the case with most foreign language settings. In such contexts, it makes more sense to talk about *automatized explicit knowledge* (DeKeyser, 2010, 2017; DeKeyser & Juffs, 2005) which is functionally indistinguishable from implicit knowledge but still relies on rules that advanced learners can easily access. It is this rationale that underlay the construction of measures of L2 knowledge used in this investigation. However, for the sake of convenience, the term *implicit knowledge* will be employed throughout the remainder of the paper, with the vital caveat that it is primarily meant to refer in this case to *automatized explicit knowledge*.

When it comes to establishing the mastery of L2 grammar in SLA studies with the aim of relating it to some other variables, several options are available. It is possible, for example, to take into account the scores on standardized tests (e.g., CAE, TEOFL) or some of the sections they include. Although such tests are characterized by high validity and reliability, they do not always provide us with the exact information we might require and are perhaps more suitable in cases where we are interested in general indices of TL proficiency. Another option is to rely on the outcomes of evaluation measures used in a particular institution such as final grades in courses devoted to grammar or scores on official examinations in English or their parts. While this approach is relatively straightforward and very practical, one possible problem is that the assessment provided by different teachers is not always comparable while homegrown tests might not always be designed with sufficient rigor. Also, when the evaluation scale is limited to just several choices, it may not be sensitive enough for differentiating among participants for research purposes. Some empirical investigations also resort to learners' self-assessment, either as a sole index of attainment or in combination with other indices. In this case, however, a question arises as to the extent to which students can be expected to be both objective and precise when conducting self-evaluation, and, yet again, the sensitivity of the scale used. The best option by far is to develop tailor-made tests that would tap into learners' mastery of TL grammar. However, this solution clearly poses a daunting challenge with large samples, not only because of the complex logistics or finding teachers who are willing to help out with data collection but also because the conditions of administration should be similar. Besides, the value of such tests is by no

means guaranteed if the decision as to what structures to include and how to establish their mastery is not meticulously premeditated. First, especially at more advanced levels, it is extremely difficult to decide on the selection of structures that would be reflective of the overall command of TL grammar. Thus, it might be warranted to focus on a specific feature or a set of such features, the mastery of which will be easier to diagnose on the basis of the profiles of participants. Second, it is necessary to go beyond traditional test items (e.g., paraphrasing, translation, multiple choice), which tap only into explicit knowledge, and also include tasks that require the use of grammar in communicative interaction, which allows insights into implicit or highly automatized explicit knowledge. Obviously, this will be more feasible if the focus is on a specific structure rather than a range of grammatical features (cf. Pawlak, 2014, 2020). In line with this reasoning, in the study reported in this chapter, grammar attainment was measured in terms of the receptive and productive dimensions of the explicit and implicit (automatized) knowledge of different aspects of the English passive.

3 Previous Research on Beliefs About Grammar Instruction

Although there are quite a few studies that have examined beliefs about grammar teaching, they have pursued sometimes quite different goals, involved different populations, adopted diverse interpretations of what GI involves (e.g., inclusive or exclusive of the provision of error correction), and relied on disparate data-collection instruments. There is also a handful of studies which have looked into the relationship between learners' beliefs and their mastery of L2 grammar. In light of this, the overview in the present section is limited to studies that are the most germane to the focus of the empirical investigation reported later in this chapter, that is, such that have targeted beliefs manifested by learners, also in comparison with those exhibited by teachers, as well as those that have attempted to take into account attainment in relation to TL grammar.

Two early studies that looked into learners' beliefs about GI in terms of the provision of corrective feedback (CF) were conducted by Griffiths and Chunhong (2008), who focused on English majors from China, and Pawlak (2010), who collected data from secondary school learners in Poland. Even though the researchers set their sights on quite different aspects of CF, the results were similar, indicating the need for frequent error correction, especially such that is direct and is provided by the teacher rather than other learners. Pawlak (2011), in turn, investigated the differences in beliefs about grammar teaching exhibited by 106 Italian and 106 Polish university students majoring in English. The data were collected by means of an earlier version of the tool employed in the study reported below. While there were some differences between the two groups of participants regarding specific instructional options, both of them were convinced of the importance of grammar teaching

as well as the need for feedback focusing on erroneous use of grammar structures in the TL. In addition, both groups expressed a preference for a structural syllabus, the use of deduction to introduce new grammar structures, the need to practice these structures in different ways, also in the course of communicative tasks, as well as the utility of immediate CF on grammar errors, provided by the teacher. CF as such was also the focus of the study carried out by Kartchava and Ammar (2014), who explored whether beliefs in this respect determined what was noticed and learnt by 99 participants in the L2 classroom. The analysis indicated that two out of four common beliefs correlated with noticing in an immediate recall measure as well as scores on a picture description and spot-the-difference task, but none of them was related to actual learning outcomes. Beliefs about GI were also investigated by Graus and Coppen (2016), who focused on 832 university learners of English enrolled in a teacher education program in Denmark. It turned out that the respondents favored explicit inductive instruction, although higher-level participants were more likely to manifest a preference for embedding grammar structures in communicative activities. Another two studies that are worth mentioning at this juncture were conducted with the aim of developing and validating research instruments that would gauge learners' beliefs about GI and the provision of CF. One of these, undertaken by Loewen et al. (2009), resulted in the construction of a comprehensive instrument of this kind and the analysis of the data also demonstrated that the beliefs in question varied between participants studying English as a second and foreign language. In the second study, Spada et al. (2009) developed a questionnaire tapping learners' preferences concerning isolated and integrated form-focused instruction (i.e., intervention that precedes or follows a communicative activity vs. such that occurs during its performance, respectively).

There are also research projects that have sought to compare beliefs about grammar instruction and corrective feedback held by learners and teachers. Schulz (1996, 2001), for example, investigated this issue in the US and Columbia, showing that in both cases it was learners who favored more explicit GI but also providing some evidence for the impact of cultural differences. Liao and Wang (2008) employed questionnaires and interviews to gain insights into the beliefs about GI exhibited by high school students and teachers in Taiwan. It was found that while both groups were favorably disposed to teaching this TL subsystem, the learners were much more in favor of the use of immediate, direct corrective feedback. In another study, Jean and Simard (2011) looked into the perceptions of GI in the case of high school students learning English and French as a second language as well as their teachers. Despite slight discrepancies between both groups of participants, the main finding was that grammar teaching was seen as necessary but not particularly enjoyable, with the TL, age and gender playing a marginal role. Pawlak (2013) employed the same instrument as in the study mentioned above (Pawlak, 2011) to compare the beliefs concerning form-focused instruction of Polish university students majoring in English and lecturers working in English departments. He demonstrated that while both groups were convinced about the importance of GI, they differed with respect to the utility of grammar for mastering specific TL skills as well as the preferred instructional options (e.g., students tended to favor more the deductive approach and

more controlled types of practice). Some incongruences were also found by Deng and Lin (2016) in their investigation of beliefs about GI in the case of high school teachers and students in China. In particular, the analysis of the data gathered through questionnaires and interviews showed, somewhat in line with the findings reported by Pawlak (2013), that the teachers were much more likely to opt for a focus on communication. More recently, Mansouri, Jami, and Salmani (2019) compared the beliefs about isolated and integrated GI held by students and teachers in intensive English programs taught in colleges in Iran and the USA. Participants' responses on questionnaires containing both Likert-scale statements and open-ended items revealed similar trends to those identified in previously described studies, with teachers being more enthusiastic about integrated GI and learners showing a preference for isolated GI.

Research that has actually attempted to relate to beliefs about grammar teaching and the correction of grammar errors to the mastery of this TL subsystem is extremely scarce. One relevant study was conducted by Polat (2009), who investigated the extent to which matches and mismatches between Georgian teachers' and learners' perceptions of the importance of grammar and preferred ways of teaching it impacted achievement, both in relation to this TL subsystem and overall. Using data from questionnaires, interviews, observations, evaluation inventories and coursebook analysis, the researcher showed an overwhelming preference for traditional GI for both groups and demonstrated that matching beliefs translated into higher grades in grammar but not greater overall L2 achievement. In light of the paucity of existing empirical evidence, there is a need for more research that would address the link between learners' cognitions concerning GI and their mastery of this TL subsystem. This is the gap that the study reported below sought to fill, narrowing down grammar attainment to explicit and implicit knowledge of the English passive voice in terms of its production and comprehension.

4 The Study

4.1 Aim

The present study constitutes part of a larger-scale research project which aimed to examine the relationship between selected cognitive and affective individual difference variables, and the knowledge of TL grammar in the case of advanced learners of English. Its main objective was to shed light on the link between students' self-reported beliefs about different aspects of GI and their mastery of the English passive voice in terms of the productive and receptive dimensions of explicit and implicit knowledge. The choice of the targeted structure was dictated by the need to find a grammatical feature with which the participants were to some extent familiar but which was versatile enough to ensure differential levels of performance. The passive satisfied this requirement because its accurate, meaningful and appropriate

use necessitates reliance on a wide range of tenses, aspects and verb forms, and it can be said to pose considerable difficulty with respect to both explicit and implicit knowledge (Ellis, 2006). The following research question was formulated: *What is the relationship between beliefs about different aspects of grammar instruction and the knowledge of the targeted structure?*

4.2 Participants

The participants were 132 Polish university students majoring in English (88 females and 44 males), enrolled in years 1, 2 and 3 of a three-year BA program. The main aim of the program was to develop a high level of TL proficiency so that its graduates could work in the capacity of English teachers, translators, interpreters, or business and media specialists, and, if they so wished, pursue their MA either in the L2 or some other area. The core of the program was an intensive course in English as a foreign language, divided into components devoted to specific TL skills and subsystems such as grammar, pronunciation, speaking and writing. The students were also required to attend a number of content classes (e.g., linguistics, literature, culture, history, foreign language methodology), most of which were also taught through the medium of English. The students' experience in learning English amounted to 11.98 ($SD = 2.84$) years and they rated the importance of L2 grammar as 4.15 ($SD = 0.62$) on a 5-point scale (1 lowest and 5 highest). Participants' TL proficiency fell somewhere between B2 and C1 in terms of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe, 2001) but considerable individual variation could be observed not only between the levels of the BA program but also within the same year. The majority of the students reported regular contact with English, but in most cases it was confined to the media and online resources, with scarce opportunities to interact with native speakers or other advanced users of English.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Two types of data were collected for the purpose of the present investigation: those related to beliefs about grammar instruction and those reflecting the mastery of the targeted feature. Participants' beliefs about GI were tapped by means of a slightly modified version of the tool used by the present author in two previous studies (i.e., Pawlak, 2011, 2013). The instrument consisted of 30 5-point Likert-scale items (1—*strongly disagree* and 5—*strongly agree*), which pertained to the following six areas: (1) overall importance of grammar instruction, also with respect to specific TL skills, (2) the design of the syllabus (i.e., structural vs. task-based or task-supported), (3) planning grammar-oriented lessons (i.e., isolated vs. integrated teaching, or the extent to which instruction is embedded in communication-based tasks); (4) the ways in which grammar structures are introduced (i.e., deduction vs. induction,

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha values for different subscales and measures (N = 132)

	α	$M(SD)$
Beliefs about GI—subscales		
Overall importance of grammar instruction	0.81	4.22 (0.55)
Design of the syllabus	0.72	3.92 (0.82)
Planning grammar-oriented lessons	0.74	3.85 (0.86)
Introducing grammar structures	0.86	3.83 (1.04)
Practicing grammar structures	0.78	4.15 (0.96)
Correcting errors in the use of grammar structures	0.88	3.78 (0.86)
Mastery of the English passive—the four measures		
Explicit productive knowledge	0.87	7.35 (2.62)
Explicit receptive knowledge	0.70	10.15 (1.85)
Implicit productive knowledge	0.89	5.95 (3.05)
Implicit receptive knowledge	0.62	8.72 (1.82)

reliance on the first language, the use of grammatical terminology), (5) the ways in which grammar structures are practiced (i.e., controlled vs. communicative practice, production-oriented or reception-based instructional options), and (6) the correction of errors in the use of grammar structures (i.e., its focus, timing, source as well as corrective techniques used). The Likert-scale statements representing each of the six categories were scattered throughout the inventory rather than grouped together. Cronbach alpha values calculated for each of the categories were by and large satisfactory (see Table 1). The instrument also contained a demographic section with queries concerning the length of experience in learning English, evaluation of the importance of L2 grammar, self-assessment, etc.

When it comes to the mastery of TL grammar, operationalized in terms of the ability to use different aspects of the passive voice, it was tapped by means of four measures which were specifically designed for the purpose of gauging the productive and receptive dimensions of explicit and implicit knowledge of the targeted feature. The measures were the following:

1. *A measure of explicit productive knowledge*, which required participants to put 15 verbs in parentheses in a continuous text in the correct form; no strict time limit was imposed; each response received 0, 0.5 or 1 points, depending on the seriousness of the error;
2. *A measure of explicit receptive knowledge*, which comprised an untimed grammaticality judgment test, where the students were asked to indicate whether 15 sentences were correct or not and in the latter case add a justification for this judgment; each response was accorded 0, 0.5 or 1 point, depending on whether it was accurate and whether an appropriate justification was provided;
3. *A measure of implicit productive knowledge,* which took the form of a timed focused communication task (Ellis, 2003); the participants were asked to

describe a place using 15 prompts; they had two minutes to prepare and then another eight to complete the task; their oral performance was audio-recorded; each prompt could be accorded 15 points and each sentence generated on its basis received 0, 0.5 or 1 points, depending on error gravity;

4. *A measure of implicit receptive knowledge*, which was a timed grammaticality judgment test; participants decided whether 15 sentences included in a PowerPoint presentation were correct or not; in this case, the responses received 0 or 1 points, depending on whether the judgment was accurate.

Two crucial points need to be made about the four measures. First, their internal consistency reliability, determined on the basis of Cronbach alpha, varied but can be overall regarded as satisfactory, perhaps with the exception of that of implicit receptive knowledge (see Table 1). Second, yet again with the exception of the measure of implicit receptive knowledge where the scoring was quite straightforward (i.e., correct vs. incorrect), the responses of 20% of the students were coded by another researcher, with interrater reliability falling in the range of 0.81–0.94.

The data concerning beliefs and GI and the mastery of the passive were subjected to quantitative analysis. In the case of the questionnaire, this involved calculating means and standard deviations for specific items and the six main domains, with the caveat that some of the statements were key-reversed. A higher overall mean for a specific area indicated greater importance of grammar as well as a reflection of more traditional ways of teaching it (e.g., structural syllabus, deduction, controlled practice). In relation to the measures of the explicit and implicit knowledge of the targeted feature, the scores for all the answers were added in each case and then mean scores and standard deviations were computed. Pearson correlation coefficients were then tabulated among the various domains of beliefs and the different dimensions of L2 knowledge.

4.4 Findings

Although this was not the main focus of the present study, a few comments are in order about the nature of the participants' beliefs about GI and their mastery of the targeted feature (see Table 1). In the first place, it is evident that learners recognize the importance of TL grammar ($M = 4.22$) and they tend to express a preference towards more traditional ways of teaching it, as can be seen in the fact that the means for all the five remaining categories were higher than 3.5, reaching the highest value (4.15) for practicing L2 grammar structures. The extent of individual variation was quite limited, with the *SD* values only exceeding 1.00 in the case of the introduction of grammar structures. With respect to attainment, the students did best on receptive measures, irrespective of whether they tapped into explicit or implicit knowledge ($M = 10.15$ and $M = 8.72$, respectively). On the other hand and predictably to some extent, the measure of implicit productive knowledge turned out to be more challenging than the measure of explicit productive knowledge ($M = 5.95$ and M

Table 2 Correlations among different domains of beliefs and the measures of L2 knowledge ($N = 132$)

Beliefs about GI—subscales	Explicit productive	Explicit receptive	Implicit productive	Implicit receptive
Overall importance of grammar instruction	0.71*	0.63*	0.44*	0.22
Design of the syllabus	0.21	0.18	0.12	0.06
Planning grammar-oriented lessons	0.04	0.12	0.15	0.03
Introducing grammar structures	0.68*	0.36*	−0.32*	−0.14
Practicing grammar structures	0.58*	0.18	0.45*	−0.03
Correcting errors in the use of grammar structures	0.75*	0.44*	0.53*	0.34*

Note *indicates a statistically significant value at 0.05

= 7.35, respectively). By contrast, it should be noted that individual variation was more pronounced on the productive rather than the receptive measures.

The results of the correlational analysis of the different subscales of beliefs and the mean scores on the productive and receptive facets of the measures of explicit and implicit knowledge of the English passive are presented in Table 2. It immediately becomes clear that beliefs about syllabus design or lesson planning are not related to any of the dimensions of L2 knowledge of the targeted feature. On the other end of the spectrum, a number of significant correlations were identified as well. In relation to explicit productive knowledge, it correlated positively and strongly with beliefs about overall importance of GI and correction of grammar errors ($r = 0.71$ and $r = 0.75$, respectively), accounting for 50% and 56% of the variance. It was also positively, moderately related to beliefs about the introduction of grammar structures ($r = 0.68$) and the ways of practicing these structures ($r = 0.58$), with 46% and 34% of the variability being explained. Explicit receptive knowledge, in turn, correlated positively and moderately with beliefs about the importance of GI ($r = 0.63$, 60% of the variance explained), and positively but weakly with those concerning the way in which grammar should be introduced ($r = 0.36$, 13% of the variance accounted for) as well as those about correction of grammar errors ($r = 0.44$, 19% of the variability explained). When it comes to implicit knowledge, the measure of its productive dimension was positively and moderately related to beliefs about the correction of grammar errors ($r = 0.63$), accounting for 40% of the variance. Positive, weak correlations were also uncovered in the case of the importance of GI and ways of practicing specific grammar structures ($r = 0.44$ and $r = 0.45$), with 19% and 20% of the variance accounted for. Interestingly, the scores on the task tapping into this type of representation proved to be negatively and weakly correlated with

beliefs about how points of grammar are introduced ($r = -0.32$, 10% of the variance explained). Finally, performance on the measure of implicit receptive knowledge was only significantly correlated to beliefs about errors correction, with this relationship being positive and weak ($r = 0.34$, ca. 12% of the variance explained).

5 Discussion

Before addressing the research question directly, it makes sense to offer a brief interpretation of the participants' beliefs about GI identified in the present study as well as their knowledge of the English passive. With respect to beliefs, the students were convinced of the overall importance of grammar and were for the most part in favor of more traditional approaches to teaching it. In other words, most of them tended to show a predilection for a clear sequence of the grammar structures taught, traditional class formats, deduction, controlled practice and direct, immediate, teacher-provided correction. While this cannot be interpreted as meaning that they attach no significance whatsoever to using grammar in communicative interaction, the trends are quite clear-cut. On the whole, these findings mirror those of many of the studies mentioned in the literature review (e.g., Jean & Simard, 2011; Mansouri et al, 2019; Pawlak, 2011, 2013; Schulz, 2001) and they should also not come as much of a surprise in this context. After all, while grammar may not be given ample weight on the final examinations in high school, it is routinely taught in English classes which still mostly follow the structural syllabus. Moreover, once students are accepted into the BA program in English, they are required to get to know the various intricacies of this subsystem which are the focus of separate classes. The mastery of grammar is also decisive on the end-of-the-year examinations in English, not only because this subsystem is tested in its own right but also because it largely determines the outcomes of oral interviews and written assignments, as specific rubrics are assigned to it. With respect to the measures of the knowledge of the different aspects of the passive, what is surprising is the relatively low students' performance, oscillating between a little over 75% on the measure of explicit receptive knowledge and ca. 40% of the measure of implicit productive knowledge. This shows that despite their overall assumed level, there remains much to be learnt and then automatized when it comes to the knowledge of the passive. On the other hand, it could have been expected that the productive tasks would be more challenging than the receptive tasks and those tapping implicit knowledge would be more difficult than those targeting implicit knowledge. This is because, production requires simultaneous reliance on and coordination of different resources and processes (Kormos, 2006) while the performance of complex tasks, particularly in real-time processing, places heavy demands on working memory (Tagarelli et al., 2015; Wright, 2015).

Shifting the focus back to the main question investigated in the present study, that is the relationship between beliefs about different aspects of GI and the mastery of the passive, the findings are complex and not always easy to interpret. Perhaps the least surprising is the fact that participants' performance on all the measures, except

for that of implicit receptive knowledge, was positively related to beliefs about the overall importance of GI, particularly in the case of productive and receptive explicit knowledge. Given the nature of the program, it certainly makes sense that positive beliefs in this area should go hand in hand with grammar attainment, whether more broadly or more narrowly operationalized. By the same token, it is unsurprising that positive beliefs concerning the correction of grammar-related errors were related positively to all types of L2 knowledge, even if explicit, immediate teacher correction was by and large favored. This is because the provision of CF is something that English majors are accustomed to and it occurs in the course of both controlled practice in grammar classes and communicative interaction in other components of the intensive English course. Besides, in the latter case it is obviously not limited to largely implicit recasts or comments provided after interaction has been terminated (Ellis, 2017; Pawlak, 2014). Additionally, the correlations were on the whole stronger in the case of productive tasks, a finding that can be explained by the fact that CF can only be provided when learners generate some kind of output, whatever the context in which this transpires. In light of the overall nature of the participants' beliefs in these two areas, with a clear preference for deduction and controlled practice, a positive relationship with the performance on measures of explicit knowledge was to a large extent predictable. It is also unsurprising that the correlation held for both production and reception in the case of the beliefs about introducing grammar but only for production in the case of practicing grammar structures. The reason for this could be that while getting to know a specific rule involves both modalities, practice activities in the grammar course are primarily based on output production rather than just understanding form-meaning-function mappings, as postulated in VanPatten's (2003) input processing theory. In this connection, the negative, weak link between beliefs about how TL grammar should be introduced and the measure of implicit productive knowledge is understandable since any kind of communicate practice in such contexts is highly unlikely.

At the same time, some of the results of the correlational analyses are exceedingly difficult to interpret. First, beliefs about practicing grammar, which favored a more traditional approach to such practice were positively, albeit weakly, correlated with performance on the measure of implicit productive knowledge. This may suggest that the practice that actually typically occurs in grammar classes is not entirely traditional or controlled but also that the participants, possibly due to their previous experiences, find it difficult to distinguish between different types of activities, being convinced that all of them contribute to their mastery of the targeted structures. A question also arises why the beliefs concerning syllabus choice or class design failed to be related to the mastery of the English passive. One possible explanation is that, while the participants were in favor of more traditional solutions, such issues do not at the end of the day have a bearing on grammar attainment for the simple reason that it is the actual tasks that they engage in that play the decisive role. Yet another issue which deserves consideration is the fact that, on the whole, students' beliefs were more likely to correlate with measures of explicit rather than implicit knowledge. This could be ascribed to the overall more traditional orientation of the students who

apparently opted for more explicit types of instruction where they get to know the requisite rules and fall back upon them when needed.

The present study is not without its share of limitations. First, it could be argued that it might be somewhat futile to seek relationships between beliefs about different aspects of GI and the mastery of a specific grammar feature, the English passive in this case. While this seems to be a valid reservation in view of the fact how many different structures the mastery of L2 grammar encompasses, it should also be pointed out that, based on the results of the tests, this was the right structure to use, let alone the fact that its accurate, meaningful and appropriate use is contingent upon appropriate employment of a range of other structures (e.g., tenses, aspects, modals, verb forms). Second, the empirical investigation relied solely on quantitative data and the insights into the links between beliefs about GI and performance could have been considerably enriched by insights obtained through interviews or immediate reports upon the completion of the tasks intended to shed light on the mastery of the passive. Third, there can be doubts about the internal reliability consistency of some of the measures, in particular the test of implicit receptive knowledge, which might at least partly explain the failure to identify relationships with most of the dimensions of beliefs about GI investigated in the study. Fourth, it could also be argued that some of the measures of the knowledge of the passive may not have elicited the kind of employment of this structure for which they were designed. For example, the measure of implicit productive knowledge may have allowed the participants to excessively draw upon prefabricated patterns in which the passive was used (cf. Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2020) rather than relevant rules underlying such use.

6 Conclusion

Learners' beliefs clearly have the potential to affect different aspects of how the process of L2 learning unfolds and to impact the outcomes of this process, with the learning of L2 grammar certainly not being an exception. However, empirical studies seeking to link the two constructs are few and far between. The study reported in this chapter attempted to determine whether beliefs concerning different domains of GI were related to productive and receptive measures of explicit and implicit knowledge of the English passive voice. Even though the results were complex, positive, strong, moderate and weak relationships were revealed between the four measures of L2 knowledge and different categories of beliefs. Despite possible reservations about whether the command of a particular structure is reflective of overall attainment with respect to TL grammar and whether it can be expected to correlate with beliefs in this domain, this is certainly a promising line of inquire that deserves to be further pursued. This is because the effectiveness of the instructional options that we apply in our classrooms is bound to be mitigated by what learners think about the efficacy and soundness of these options. This is certainly an area in urgent need of further research if we need to improve upon the way we teach grammar in an L2, be it English or any other additional language.

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