

The use of imaginative conditional clauses by Bosnian university-level English-majoring students

Abstract:

Being syntactically and semantically fairly complex, conditional clauses are a rather troublesome area in the English grammar, even when the learners' focus is directed only towards the three basic patterns. In spite of English language learners' prolonged exposure to these constructions, major errors are still detected in their production. Particularly problematic are imaginative conditional clauses, with their two subtypes, namely present/future hypothetical/counterfactual and past counterfactual conditional clauses, which are considered to be more marked and containing more morphological material than real conditional clauses. However, two subtypes of imaginative conditional clauses also differ in markedness, with past counterfactual conditional clauses being more marked than present/future hypothetical/counterfactual conditional clauses. Thus, the present study aims to explore whether 103 Bosnian university-level English-majoring students face more difficulties in the production of past counterfactual conditional clauses than present/future hypothetical/counterfactual conditional clauses on different types of tests, namely the English-Bosnian translation test, the Bosnian-English translation test, the rewriting test and the fill-in-the-blank test. Moreover, it aims to investigate whether some external factors, such as grade-point average and grade level, have a significant effect on the use of these conditional clauses. The research results point to the students' slightly higher results obtained in the use of past counterfactual conditional clauses overall and on two different tasks, namely the English-Bosnian translation test and the rewriting test. Moreover, the results also indicate that the students' GPA from grammar-teaching courses and their grade level have a significant effect on the overall and individual use of two subtypes of imaginative conditional clauses.

Keywords: *Present/Future Hypothetical Conditional Clauses; Present Counterfactual Conditional Clauses; Past Counterfactual Conditional Clauses; Markedness.*