HONG KONG PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN’S SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: THE IMPACT OF FILIPINA DOMESTIC WORKERS

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Abstract

Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) in Hong Kong are a marginalised group, with many being subjected to various kinds of abuse. Numerous empirical studies documented the nature and extent of the abuse FDWs suffer. This study, with the aim of enhancing the prestige of FDWs, investigated the impact that Filipino Domestic Workers (FilDWs) in Hong Kong have on children’s L2 English listening comprehension and spoken fluency. It was the first research that explored the impact of FilDWs on both a productive and receptive skill. A total of 20 children from Chinese Medium of Instruction (CMI) schools between eight and 12 years old were used as research subjects. The experimental group consisted of 10 children from households with FilDWs, while the control group was composed of 10 children from households without FilDWs. Each group consisted of six boys and four girls. Prior to doing the study a pilot study was launched at a CMI school where five children of the target age group were tested. Based on the results of the pilot study, a test was designed to assess both listening comprehension and spoken fluency. Each participant listened to a children’s story and was asked 25 fixed questions about it. All answers were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Results showed that those in the experimental group consistently outperformed those in the control group by substantial margins, even after controlling for age and gender. These results serve as evidence against the popular assertion in Hong Kong that FDWs have a bad influence on children’s English.
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