Form-Focused Instruction, Learners' Perceptions, and Second Language Acquisition

Hee Jeong Hwang[1*]

[1]**Liberal Arts School, Jungwon University**

형태초점교수활동, 학습자의 인식도, 그리고 제2언어습득

황희정[1*]

[1]중원대학교 교양학부

Abstract   The purpose of the study was two folded: to examine whether form-focused instruction (FFI) with corrective feedback (CF) is effective for the acquisition of the target linguistic forms and to find out the extent to which of the students' perceptions as well as their attitudes towards English instruction that they received. Tests and questionnaires were implemented to 122 Korean EFL students from eight classes enrolled in an English communication course. They were randomly assigned to three groups: the input-based group, who received typographical input enhancement materials, so-called the TIE group, the output-based group, who performed dictogloss tasks, so-called the DICT group, and the control group (CG). The data analysis was made on both tests and questionnaires by using SPSS 21.0 for Windows. The study found that different types of FFI with CF contributed to the improvement of students' grammatical knowledge and both the TIE and DICT task group students positively changed their perceptions and understanding as well as their attitudes towards the English instruction given, and students in all groups preferred pair work activities. In addition, most of the TIE and DICT students showed their interest and satisfaction with English class, whereas the CG group students did not. Based on the findings, this study suggested that well-planned and properly-chosen FFI in the form of pair work activities should be applied in classrooms with consideration of students' instructional preference in Korean EFL contextual settings.

요 약   본 연구의 목적은 형태초점 교수법과 오류수정 피드백이 영어 구문 학습에 효과적인지를 살펴보고, 이에 대한 학생들의 반응을 파악하기 위함이다. 연구 참여자들은 필수과목인 영어회화 강좌를 수강하는 8개 분반의 초급수준의 대학교 1학년 학생 122명이다. 이들 여덟 개 분반을 무작위로 세 그룹 즉 시각적 입력강화 집단(TIE group), 출력강화 집단(DICT group)과 통제집단(CG group)으로 나누어 사전·사후 평가 및 설문조사를 실시하였다. SPSS 21.0 for Window 프로그램을 사용하여 형태초점 교수법과 오류수정 피드백의 효과와 학생들의 영어수업에 대한 인식과 태도의 변화를 분석하였다. 연구결과, 본 연구에 활용된 형태초점 교수활동인 입력강화 및 출력강화 활동과 오류수정 피드백 모두가 학생들이 문법형태에 대한 지식을 향상시키는데 효과가 있는 것으로 나타났으며, 실험집단 모두가 형태초점 교수법과 오류수정 피드백에 긍정적인 인식과 태도를 보였고, 실험에 참여한 모든 학생들이 짝 활동(pair work)을 선호하였다. 또한, 통제집단(CG group)을 제외한 대부분의 시각적 입력강화 집단(TIE group)과 출력강화 집단(DICT group) 학생들은 영어수업에 대한 만족과 흥미를 보였던 것으로 나타났다. 이러한 실험 결과에 의거하여, 한국의 EFL 학습 환경에 있는 학생들의 영어 학습에 대한 개인적인 선호도를 고려하여 짝 활동 (pair work)의 형태로 목표문법형태 학습에 적절한 형태초점 교수법을 적용할 것을 제안한다.

Keywords : attitude, corrective feedback, dictogloss, form-focused instruction, strategy, typographical input enhancement

1. Introduction

There has been a controversial debate of teaching linguistic forms in the area of second language education. Many researchers maintain that formal grammar instruction is necessary at least, for some aspects of language[1], whereas there are also those who claim that instruction may not be necessary[2], which stemmed from Krashen's[3] pedagogy of non-intervention.

However, since a number of research studies reported that L2 learners do not establish full linguistic competence simply by focusing on meaning without any form-related instruction [4-10], Krashen's pedagogy has been challenged from the viewpoints of the essential claim of the facilitative position that although formal instruction is not necessary in L2 acquisition, it contributes to learning by encouraging the process of natural acquisition.

Long[11] suggested a new way of language teaching, focus on form (hereafter, FFI or form-focused instruction). The idea of FFI approach underlies the act of communication and the development of communicative competence. FFI techniques constitute two contrasting approaches, input-enhanced versus output-enhanced. Neither of the two contrasting FFI approaches can be solely implemented in real L2 classrooms and thus research studies on FFI have been conducted combined with one or more teaching strategies, usually explicit correction or recasts as a type of corrective feedback (CF), or self-correction [12,13,14].

The advantage of FFI is that linguistic knowledge of learners can be improved through instruction that draws their attention to form without interrupting conversation, but that is not isolated from the meaningful contexts.

In recent situations, however, many Korean EFL learners seem to be reluctant to produce the target language although the fundamental goal in the classroom is to practice language for communication. Further, there still exist classroom conditions in Korea which are limited to only language output practice without understanding the contextual use of the grammatical structures. Thus, objecting to much emphasis on separate linguistic items in typical Korean EFL contexts in which there is a lack of the natural language input, teaching language structures to develop learners' communicative competence is a crucial yet challenging task.

It is thought that application of FFI strategies to Korean EFL learners' classrooms can be one of the desirable teaching methods to cope with the challenging task. Nonetheless, there are only few studies of FFI on a Korean EFL context. This calls for the present study inviting Korean EFL learners as participants.

This study is aimed to investigate whether FFI along with CF is effective for learning a L2 and to identify how students perceive English instruction provided in class. The specific research questions are as follows:

(1) Do the effects of different FFI contribute to the grammatical knowledge development of Korean EFL students?
(2) What are the perceptions of Korean EFL students regarding English instruction that they received?

2. Methods

2.1 Design

This is a quantitative research study for investigating the effectiveness of FFI and the students' perceptions and attitudes towards English instruction that they received.

2.2 Participants

In this study participants included 122 EFL college students from eight different classes taught by the researcher of the study, in the first year attending a required English communication course at a university in Korea. Three groups (two experimental and one control) were formed: the input-based group (TIE), the

output-based group (DICT), and the control group (CG).

2.3 Instruments

To measure variables which the present study considers as crucial factors, two modules of instruments are used: tests (pre-test and post-test) and questionnaires (pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire).

2.3.1 Pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test and post-test were developed to examine whether the effectiveness of FFI and CF used as experimental treatment on the acquisition of target linguistic forms. Both tests consisted of four formats: grammaticality judgement test, fill-in-the-blank test, controlled writing test, and open-ended test. The number of question items for both tests was the same: 40 questions scored one point each.

2.3.2 Pre-questionnaire and Post-questionnaires

Questionnaires were planned to compare any differences of the participants' opinions about the English instruction before and after the experiment.

Pre-questionnaire consisted of thirteen questions: four questions for general information about the participants such as English studying hours; nine questions for their perceptions and understanding (five questions) and attitudes (four questions) towards the English instruction that they received in the past.

Post-questionnaire contained twenty questions. It did not include the same questions about general information as the pre-questionnaire asked, but contained the same version of the pre-questionnaire about their perceptions and attitudes towards the English instruction to find out the extent to which they changed after the experiment. Other than the same version of pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire contained the participants' preferences about the learning strategies, classroom activity forms, and assessment of English class. It also asked the participants to make remarks on the instruction describing whether and how the tasks helped them to

produce grammatically correct sentences, which provided further understanding about what they thought used as supplementary information on the results of their response analysis.

Drawing on the question items adopted and modified from the previous studies [15,16], both pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale in the range of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The Cronbach alpha coefficient was checked for the same question items in the pre-questionnaire. It displayed acceptable reliability coefficient, which was 0.718, indicating that the question items had relatively high consistency.

2.4 Procedure

A week before the experiment was given, pre-questionnaire and pre-test were conducted to all the participants of the study.

The input-based group (TIE), who consisted of 35 students, received typographical input enhancement materials with bold-faced letters. The output-based group (DIICT), who consisted of 41 students, were provided with a worksheet for output enhancement materials for performing a dictogloss task. The control group with 46 students received traditional grammar instruction when there was the time to learn linguistic forms during the classroom activities in the curriculum.

Soon after the experiment, which lasted for 16 weeks, all the participants were post-tested in order that they might not be affected by other factors such as follow-up lessons or exposures of other materials. The following week of the experiment, Post-questionnaire was administered to each group.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics version 21.0 for Windows. The reliability coefficient of questionnaires was checked by using Cronbach's alpha. The significance level of the statistical analyses was set at $p < .05$.

All scores of both pre-test and post-test were entered

to compute descriptive and inferential statistics. Before the experimental treatment was provided, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the pre-test to confirm the three groups' homogeneity. A paired t-test was performed in order to measure the improvement of the groups in acquiring targer language forms after the treatment.

For the same question items in pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire, a one-way ANOVA was performed in order to determine students' responses about the English instructional approach used in the study.

For the questions about students' preferences in post-questionnaire, descriptive statistics was used to identify their answers about learning strategies, classroom activity forms, and assessment of English class.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test by Groups

To test for a statistical significance of the score difference between pretest score and posttest score by groups, a paired t-test was performed. The results were shown in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, all three groups showed some increase from the pretest to the posttest in all three Forms: Form 1, Form 2, and Form 3, but there were differences in the amount of increase among the groups ranging from 1.7 to 13.0. The CG group had small increase in Form 1, which was not statistically significant at the p-value of the CG group in Form 1 (p=.077). However, the TIE and DICT group showed a statistical significance between the means in all three Forms. Looking at the difference by groups, the DICT group had the largest increase and the CG group increased the smallest in all three Forms.

One linked explanation for the results was that traditional grammar instruction given to the CG group was decontextualized so that the students in the CG group might not properly understand the concepts and function of verb tenses, whereas the two experimental groups, the TIE and DICT groups, receiving FFI were exposed to the target language forms and encouraged to practice the forms while completing their task. This reflects that different types of FFI facilitate the target grammatical knowledge development of students, especially contributing to learning verb tenses. The results of the study confirmed the other previous findings that proved the effects of FFI strategies [16,17,18].

Table 1. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results by Groups

Form	Group	Test	N	Mean	SD	Mean D.	t	p-value
Form 1 (Verb Tenses)	CG	Pre-	46	11.5	4.6	1.7	-1.81	.077
		Post-	46	13.3	5.4			
	TIE	Pre-	35	11.8	4.0	9.3	-10.94	.000*
		Post-	35	21.1	3.1			
	DICT	Pre-	41	13.0	4.8	11.7	-7.43	.000*
		Post-	41	24.6	7.3			
Form 2 (Relative Clauses)	CG	Pre-	46	6.7	2.0	3.0	-6.91	.000*
		Post-	46	9.7	1.6			
	TIE	Pre-	35	6.9	2.1	2.6	-7.38	.000*
		Post-	35	9.5	1.4			
	DICT	Pre-	41	7.4	1.9	11.2	-24.46	.000*
		Post-	41	18.7	2.4			
Form 3 (Comparative Adjectives)	CG	Pre-	46	13.0	4.1	3.3	-4.24	.000*
		Post-	46	16.3	4.5			
	TIE	Pre-	35	13.0	4.9	10.9	-8.25	.000*
		Post-	35	23.9	6.1			
	DICT	Pre-	41	13.5	4.6	13.0	-12.97	.000*
		Post-	41	26.5	4.8			

* p<.05

Table 2. One-way ANOVA Test of Questionnaires

Subcategories	Questionnaire	Group	N	Mean	SD	F	p-value
Perceptions & Understanding	Pre-questionnaire	CG	46	2.3	0.4	3.10	.051
		TIE	35	2.4	0.2		
		DICT	41	2.5	0.3		
	Post-questionnaire	CG	46	2.6[a]	0.3	79.27	**.000***
		TIE	35	3.1[b]	0.2		
		DICT	41	3.3[c]	0.3		
Attitudes	Pre-questionnaire	CG	46	2.4	0.5	1.21	.302
		TIE	35	2.5	0.4		
		DICT	41	2.3	0.4		
	Post-questionnaire	CG	46	2.5[a]	0.5	17.99	**.000***
		TIE	35	2.9[b]	0.5		
		DICT	41	3.1[b]	0.4		

Scheffe : a<b   * p<.05

3.2 Comparison of Pre－questionnaire and Post－questionnaire between Groups

As presented in Table 2, there was a statistically significant difference among groups on the post-questionnaire. In the subcategory of 'Perceptions and Understanding,' the DICT group showed the greatest change with 3.3, and the CG group had the smallest with 2.6. The difference on the post-questionnaire results was statistically significant at the .05 level of alpha, suggesting that they changed the way they perceived and understood English instruction.

The results of the subcategory of 'Attitudes' revealed that the DICT group also showed the greatest change with 3.1, and the CG group had the smallest with 2.5. The difference between groups appeared, interpreting that their attitudes were changed after the treatment.

Scheffe's post hoc pairwise comparisons showed that in the subcategory, 'Perceptions and Understanding,' there was a statistical difference between the CG and TIE group as well as between the CG and DICT group. Also, there was a significant difference between the TIE and DICT group.

On the other hand, the results of 'Attitudes' from the post hoc test revealed a different pattern: there was a difference between the CG and TIE group as well as the CG and DICT group, however, no difference was shown between the TIE and DICT group.

The overall results suggested that both the TIE and DICT task group students had a better understanding of

English instruction that they received, and they positively changed the way they perceived regarding English instruction. They also changed their attitudes towards English instruction given in a good way. The results of the study supported the other previous studies reporting students' individual preference about teaching linguistic forms through context-based grammar instruction[14].

3.3 Responses to Learning Strategies

Question items about their learning strategies were intended to find out which of learning styles they used in class and to ascertain teaching approaches more suitable for them. The items asked the way they behaved dealing with grammar instruction including vocabulary, which falls into 'Type A' and 'Type B,' and dealing with lessons, which falls into 'Type C,' and dealing with listening lessons that they do not understand, which falls into 'Type D.' More specifically, 'Type A' and 'Type B' concerned whether they try to remember and concentrate on lesson even though it is difficult to understand. 'Type C' regarded whether they ask their teacher about the lesson that they do not understand, and 'Type D' asked if they make an effort to focus on the parts of the listening which they do not understand.

The results showed in Table 3 that both CG and TIE group students had positive answers in 'Type B' with 52.2% and 62.9%, respectively, whereas the DICT group responded positively to all Types, and what is

notable is that 90.2% of the DICT students favored 'Type D.' It could be stated that the dictogloss task was the most effective and eligible for the DICT group students because all of the four Types, especially 'Type D,' were helpful and relevant in doing classroom activities.

Table 3. Responses to Learning Strategies

Item	Group	Negative (SD & D) F (%)	Positive (SA & A) F (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Type A	CG	36(78.3)	10(21.7)	1.2	0.4
	TIE	18(51.4)	17(48.6)	1.5	0.5
	DICT	13(31.7)	28(68.3)	1.7	0.5
Type B	CG	22(47.8)	24(52.2)	1.5	0.5
	TIE	13(37.1)	22(62.9)	1.6	0.5
	DICT	15(36.6)	26(63.4)	1.6	0.5
Type C	CG	28(60.9)	18(39.1)	1.4	0.5
	TIE	21(60.0)	14(40.0)	1.4	0.5
	DICT	6(14.6)	35(85.4)	1.9	0.4
Type D	CG	29(63.0)	17(37.0)	1.4	0.5
	TIE	19(54.3)	16(45.7)	1.5	0.5
	DICT	4(9.8)	37(90.2)	1.9	0.3

SA: Strongly Agree that each questionnaire item is preferable, A: Agree, D: Disagree, and SD: Strongly disagree

3.4 Responses to Classroom Activity Forms

As can be shown in Table 4, 76.1% of the CG group and 51.4% of the TIE group students agreed that an individual work activity was preferable whereas there were approximately a third of the DICT students who preferred the activity. With regard to a group work activity, less than a third of the CG and TIE group but over half of the DICT students (56.1%) agreed that they favored a group work activity.

Compared to both activities, individual versus group work, this reflects that the DICT group preferred group work over individual work whereas the CG and TIE group showed their preferences about individual work over group work. One possible explanation for the results was that both the CG and TIE group preferred teacher-led classroom activities and direct input, with which they were familiar during class hours.

On the other hand, all three group students favored pair work with more than half students in CG and TIE group and even over 90% of the DICT group answered positively. This reflected that they preferred the interactive classroom environment where they could collaborate with their partner to help each other by discussion. Considering the fact that all three groups liked pair work activities the most, it was such an expected result because they, especially the DICT group students, were accustomed to classroom interaction in order to complete their dictogloss task during the entire instruction. This findings confirmed the previous studies on classroom environment [14,19,20]. Therefore, it is recommended to lead students to make more interaction doing their task.

Table 4. Responses to Classroom Activity Forms

Item	Group	Negative (SD & D) F (%)	Positive (SA & A) F (%)	M	S.D
Individual work	CG	11(23.9)	35(76.1)	1.8	0.4
	TIE	17(48.6)	18(51.4)	1.5	0.5
	DICT	27(65.9)	14(34.1)	1.3	0.5
Pair work	CG	20(43.5)	26(56.5)	1.6	0.5
	TIE	17(48.6)	18(51.4)	1.5	0.5
	DICT	3(7.3)	38(92.7)	1.9	0.3
Group work	CG	33(71.7)	13(28.3)	1.3	0.5
	TIE	25(71.4)	10(28.6)	1.3	0.5
	DICT	18(43.9)	23(56.1)	1.6	0.5

SA: Strongly Agree that each questionnaire item is preferable, A: Agree, D: Disagree, and SD: Strongly disagree

3.5 Responses to Assessment of English Class

The results showed in Table 5 that the DICT group students responded positively to over all the items, 'Satisfaction with instruction' to 'Error correction.' What is noticeable in the DICT group's responses is that 92.7% were satisfied with English instruction, which was a dictogloss task.

More than half of the TIE group students answered positively in all the items, especially in the item of 'Error correction' with 82.9% of the students in favor. However, in comparison with the DICT group, the TIE

group was less satisfied with English instruction. The major reason may be that the TIE materials given draw less attention of the students to the class even though the content of the materials, which was in a reading format of typographical input-enhancement with bold-faced letters, was the same as the DICT materials, which was in a listening format.

On the other hand, most of the CG group students were not in favor of all the question items. Among the four items, 'Teaching method' was scored the lowest with only 8.7% in favor. It could be thus interpreted that the CG group showed the least interest in English class whereas the DICT group favored their English class, which also reflected the same pattern of responses to 'Learning Strategies.' The findings suggested that the more attention that students draw to English class, the more satisfaction and the more interest that they have in class.

Table 5. Responses to Assessment of English Class

Item	Group	Negative (SD & D) F (%)	Positive (SA & A) F (%)	M	S.D
Satisfaction with instruction	CG	35(76.1)	11(23.9)	1.2	0.4
	TIE	12(34.3)	23(65.7)	1.7	0.5
	DICT	3(7.3)	38(92.7)	1.9	0.3
Contents of instruction	CG	40(87.0)	6(13.0)	1.1	0.3
	TIE	14(40.0)	21(60.0)	1.6	0.5
	DICT	18(43.9)	23(56.1)	1.6	0.5
Teaching method	CG	42(91.3)	4(8.7)	1.1	0.3
	TIE	8(22.9)	27(77.1)	1.8	0.4
	DICT	6(14.6)	35(85.4)	1.9	0.4
Error correction	CG	38(82.6)	8(17.4)	1.2	0.4
	TIE	6(17.1)	29(82.9)	1.8	0.4
	DICT	9(22.0)	32(78.0)	1.8	0.4

SA: Strongly Agree that each questionnaire item is preferable,
A: Agree, D: Disagree, and SD: Strongly disagree

4. Conclusion

The main findings of the present study are as follows: First, different types of FFI made contribution to the grammatical knowledge development of learners.

The effects of FFI were proved by comparing the pre-test and post-test results. There were differences in the amount of increase, showing a statistical significance by groups at the .05 level of alpha. The TIE and DICT group showed a statistical significance between the means in all three forms, but the CG group had small increase in verb tenses (Form 1), which was not statistically significant.

Second, the results of students' responses in questionnaires are as follows: (1) both the TIE and DICT task group students positively changed their perceptions and attitudes over the experimental period about English instruction given; (2) the CG and TIE group students showed positive responses only to 'Type B,' which concerned their behavior about grammar lessons addressing that they tried to focus on the lesson despite its difficulty, whereas the DICT group students showed positive answers to all four Types and they believed that the dictogloss task was the most effective; (3) students in all groups favored pair work activities; (4) most of the TIE and DICT students showed their interest and satisfaction with English class whereas the CG group students did not.

Based on the findings, this study shed light on some perspectives of how FFI affects improving grammatical knowledge of L2 learners and what they prefer regarding English instruction. Further, this study suggested that pair work activities should be used in classrooms. Collaborative work arouses more interaction, which helps to address theoretical issues on the role of CF in learning. This study proved that especially, the dictogloss task was influential in the learners' affective domains such as learning motivations and interest in L2. The learners who experienced a dictogloss task favored the way they performed pair work activities, and they were actively engaged in pair discussion and encouraged to produce correct forms.

Therefore, it would be ideal that language teachers carefully develop and implement FFI tasks in the form of pair work activities with consideration of students' instructional preference.

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Hee-Jeong Hwang   [Regular member]

- Feb. 2003 : McGill University, Canada, MA
- Aug. 2015 : Pusan National University, PhD
- Mar. 2008 ~ Dec. 2011 : Choonhae College of Health Sciences, Professor
- Mar. 2014 ~ current : Jungwon University, Liberal Arts School, Professor

<Research Interests>
Second Language Acquisition, Language Testing and Evaluation