

Using Focus on Form Instruction in the Teaching and Learning of Grammar in a Malaysian Classroom

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This study examines the effects of using focus on form instruction on a group of L2 learners' accurate production of the past simple tense and the past perfect tense. This study also seeks to determine the characteristics of focus on form episodes (FFE) that contributed to uptake. Using a quasi-experimental research design, data were elicited from two English as a second language (ESL) classes in a secondary school. One class was taught using focus on form instruction, while the other was taught using current standard practices. A pretest and a posttest were administered to determine the effects of focus on form instruction on the accurate production of the past simple tense and past perfect tense. In addition, the discourse during each FFE in the treatment group was audio-recorded, transcribed and coded to identify the characteristics of FFEs that influenced uptake. A quantitative analysis of the data, using a t-test for independent samples and chi-square tests indicate that the treatment group produced a significantly higher frequency of accurate past simple tense and past perfect tense than the control group. The results also suggest that characteristics such as linguistic focus, complexity, type of feedback, source and directness of FFEs influenced both the frequency of uptake and its successfulness. The findings from this study would have practical implications for second language teaching and learning.

Key words: focus on form, grammar teaching, Malaysian context

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the mid 1970's resulted in the implementation of a Communicative Syllabus in Malaysian secondary schools where "communication is the goal of second or foreign language teaching" (Asraf, 1996, p. 4). This syllabus complements task-based instruction with planned form-focused lessons designed to address particular linguistic features. However, there is empirical (e.g., Ellis, 1989; Lightbown & Spada, 1990) evidence indicating that current practices of formal grammar lessons do not result in significant grammar intake success as learners have their own built-in syllabus which could not be inverted by instructions (Long, 1998). Therefore, researchers (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001a, 2002b; Long, 1998) have turned their attention to focus on form as an alternative to grammar teaching because a focus on form lesson would allow "students' attention to be briefly shifted to linguistic code features, in context, when students experience problems as they work on communicative tasks, in a sequence determined by their own internal syllabus, current processing capacity, and learnability constraints" (Long, 1998, p. 35).

The Inadequacies of CLT in Grammar Teaching and Learning

While second language teaching has advanced tremendously since its initial focus on explicit grammar teaching, there is still a great deal of debate as to how instruction could facilitate L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Larsen-Freeman, 1995; White, 1987). Over the past two decades, there have been many changes in L2 instruction. The major change is the shift from an explicit focus on the mechanics of language (i.e., grammar, phonology, and vocabulary) to an emphasis on communication, and creating opportunities for learners to use language in more spontaneous and creative ways. This change has led to greater tolerance shown to linguistic errors. As a result, though learners show greater confidence and fluency in their oral production,

language accuracy suffers.

Research providing evidence that focus on meaning does not necessarily result in grammatical accuracy comes mainly from Canadian French immersion programs (Hammerly, 1988) which Krashen (1984) referred to as “communicative programs *par excellence*” since they are exclusively communication oriented, with a primary focus on subject-matter. In an evaluation of a group of learners’ acquisition of French as a second language, Harley and Swain (1984) and Swain (1985) found that though learners are able to speak French fluently and confidently, their accuracy in French syntax and morphology is still far below what one might expect of learners who are immersed in the second language. Meanwhile, Montgomery and Einstein (1985) compared the L2 performance of learners enrolled in an experimental communicative program in addition to their required grammar-based ESL course with learners who were taking only the required grammar course. The results of the learners’ pre- and post-test performance on a revised version of the Foreign Service Institute Oral Interview indicated that the subjects receiving the communicative instruction made greater gains on accent, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension than the subjects who received only the required grammar course. Montgomery and Einstein (1985) concluded that a “combination of form-oriented and meaning-oriented language teaching was more beneficial than form-oriented teaching alone” (p. 329).

In a similar vein, Lightbown and Spada (1990) investigated the developing oral English of approximately 100 second language learners (four intact classes). The learners were native speakers of French (aged 10-12 years old) who had received a 5-month intensive ESL course in either Grade 5 or 6 in elementary schools in Quebec. A large corpus of classroom observation data was also analyzed. A modified version of the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) scheme was used to collect the observation data. This scheme was designed to measure the communicative orientation of instruction at the level of activity type (Part A) and verbal interaction between teachers and students (Part B). For the study, a modified version of part A was used to analyze all the observation data from the four classes

(approximately 20 hours per class). Part B was used with a 2 hour segment of the observation data for each class. The Tukey multiple comparison procedure was used to analyze the data, showing the significant difference in accuracy on the use of plural –s, progressive –ing and adjective/noun placement among the four classes. The results support their hypothesis that form-based instruction within a communicative context contributes to higher levels of linguistic knowledge and performance. The findings of the study suggest that accuracy, fluency, and overall communicative skills are probably best developed through instruction that is primarily meaning-based but in which guidance is provided through timely form-focused activities and correction in context. The data available appear to indicate that there is a need to incorporate grammar in meaning-focused lessons. A much debated and investigated option is the use of focus on form instruction.

Previous research has also shown that focus on form can take place regularly in the context of message-oriented lessons without disturbing the flow of communication in ESL lessons and also that it can lead to high levels of learner uptake, much of which is successful. Ellis et al. (2001a) studied learner uptake in focus on form episodes occurring in 12 hours of communicative ESL teaching. They found that learner uptake was generally high and successful – to a much greater extent than has been reported for immersion classrooms. Similarly, Loewen (2004) investigated the occurrence of uptake in 32 hours of meaning-focused lessons in 12 English as a second language classes in Auckland, New Zealand. The results indicated that uptake occurred in these classes and characteristics such as complexity, timing, and type of feedback influenced both the production of uptake and its successfulness, while the use of pedagogic tasks and other methodological options helped draw students' attention to aspects of language code.

In sum, focus on form is a possible option to the pendulum swing from focus on forms to focus on meaning (refer to Table 1), creating a meaning-centered focus, interrupted by timely focus on linguistic aspects of the language as the need arises.

Defining Focus on Form

Ellis (2001) made a distinction between planned and incidental focus on form as types of form-focused instruction, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Types of Form-focused Instruction (Ellis, 2001, p. 17)

Type of form-focused instruction	Primary focus on attention	Distribution of attention to form	Examples
Focus on forms	Form	Intensive	Explicit and implicit grammar instruction, functional language practice
Planned focus on form	Meaning	Intensive	Input flood, input enhancement, focused communicative tasks
Incidental focus on form	Meaning	Extensive	Explicit and implicit negative feedback, pre-emptive language focus

Ellis (2001) explained that planned focus on form involves the use of focused tasks, which are communicative tasks that have been designed to elicit the use of specific linguistic form in the context of meaning-centered language use.

Planned focus on form is effective because it focuses the learners repeatedly on the same form while they are communicating (Ellis et al., 2002a). There is evidence to show that it promotes acquisition, even when this is measured in terms of spontaneous oral production. Doughty and Varela (1998), for example, provided reactive focus on form directed at past tense verbs in the context of students producing oral and written science reports. The reactive focus on form consisted of *corrective recasting*, where the teacher first repeated a learner's utterance containing a past tense error, highlighting the error through emphasis, and then, if this did not result in a learner self-correction, the teacher recast the utterance using the correct verb

form. The students showed marked improvements in posttests through oral and written science reports.

The current study expands upon the available body of research by investigating the role of planned focus on form among a group of Malaysian adolescent second language (L2) learners in task-based lessons, using communicative tasks that would lend themselves into the use of the past simple and past perfect tense.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. To what extent does planned focus on form result in accurate oral production of past simple tense and past perfect tense?
- b. What characteristics of focus on form episodes (FFEs) contributed to uptake?

Method

Subjects

Two Form 4 (equivalent to Grade 10) classes in a local high school were selected as the site for data collection. Students of both classes were of intermediate level and were taught English by two different teachers. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer.

The Materials Used in the Lessons

The control group was taught using standard current practices using materials in the prescribed textbook, in which grammar is incorporated into each chapter as a subtopic using mainly deductive learning methods with written exercises such as filling in blanks with correct grammatical forms. On the other hand, the treatment group was taught using materials developed by the

researcher incorporating meaning-focused tasks geared to elicit past tense forms and reading materials laden with the past simple tense and past perfect tense.

Coding and Analysis of Data

A total of 8 hours of classroom talk from 10 lessons were audio-recorded for the purpose of this study. Upon listening to the audio recording of the classroom talk, each Focus on Form Episode (FFE) was identified and transcribed verbatim. FFEs are a key feature of focus on form lessons. It is during FFEs that linguistic items are dealt with as the need arises.

FFEs are occasions where there was attention to linguistic form. The researcher established each point in the recording where the attention to linguistic form started and the point when it ended. The end point occurred when either the topic changed back to focus on meaning or to a focus on a different linguistic form. (Ellis et al., 2002b, p. 175).

Each FFE was then coded according to type of FFEs, linguistic focus, uptake (successful and unsuccessful), directness, complexity and type of feedback which are some of the characteristics of FFEs as identified by Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001b). Table 2 explains the different characteristics of FFEs.

TABLE 2
Characteristics of FFEs (Ellis et al., 2001b)

Characteristic	Definition	Categories
Type	When an FFE is instigated	<i>Reactive</i> : error correction <i>Student-initiated</i> : query raised by student
Linguistic focus	Aspect of language targeted in the FFE	<i>Grammar</i> <i>Vocabulary</i> <i>Pronunciation</i>
Source	Apparent reason for the instigation of an FFE	<i>Code</i> : inaccurate use of linguistic item with no apparent miscommunication <i>Message</i> : problem understanding meaning
Complexity	Length of FFE	<i>Simple</i> : only one response move <i>Complex</i> : more than one response move

Directness	Explicitness of the feedback	<i>Indirect</i> : implicit (e.g., recast) <i>Direct</i> : explicit (e.g., metalingual explanation)
Emphasis	Combination of complexity and directness	<i>Light</i> : indirect and simple <i>Heavy</i> : direct and/or complex
Timing	When the response occurs	<i>Immediate</i> <i>Deferred</i>
Response	Type of feedback provided by the teacher	<i>Provide</i> : teacher gives information about a language form either by use of a recast (reformulation of a student's utterance retaining the original meaning but improving the language) or an inform (explanation of the form) <i>Elicit</i> : teacher attempts to draw out from student(s) a language form or information about a language form
Uptake	Student response to feedback	<i>Uptake</i> : student produces response <i>No uptake</i> : student does not respond <i>No opportunity</i> : student does not have a chance to respond
Successful uptake	Quality of student response	<i>Successful uptake</i> : student incorporates linguistic information into production <i>Unsuccessful uptake</i> : student does not incorporate linguistic information into production

Two examples shown in Table 3 will help illustrate the coding system. In episode 12, S encounters a problem in understanding the meaning of a word while reading a text from a jigsaw reading activity. S asks the teacher the meaning of the word (student-initiated) and the teacher explains the meaning of the word. The FFE is simple consisting of only one response move but uptake is unsuccessful as S does not incorporate it into his speech to demonstrate understanding. Basturkmen et al. (2002, p. 9) highlighted that even if a student acknowledges the teacher's provision of linguistic information with the word 'yeah' (or in this case, with a nod), this acknowledgement does not clearly demonstrate understanding of the linguistic information and so cannot be termed as successful uptake. In episode 29, the FFE is meaning-related as the teacher provides the correct form in a recast. According to Long (1996) recasts, repetitions, expansions, confirmation and confirmation checks, and

clarification requests fall under the rubric of negotiation of meaning. Uptake is successful as the student produces the correct question.

TABLE 3
Examples of Coding System

FFEs	Characteristics
<i>Episode 12</i> S1: Teacher, what is abbot?	Type: Student-initiated (Type B) Linguistic focus: Vocabulary Source: Negotiation of meaning
T: A religious man... like a monk... Christians have priests, but Buddhists have monks or abbots. Okay?	Uptake: Uptake, Unsuccessful Complexity: Simple Directness: Direct
S1: (nods) <i>Episode 29</i> S2: I was in the kitchen?	Type: Reactive (Type A) Linguistic focus: Grammar Source: Negotiation of meaning
S3: What you did in kitchen?	Uptake: Uptake, Successful Complexity: Simple
T: What were you doing...?	Directness: Indirect
S3: What were you doing in the kitchen?	

Uptake

Uptake is a term used to describe learners' responses to the provision of feedback after either an erroneous utterance or a query about a linguistic item within the context of meaning-focused language activities (Loewen, 2004). Learner uptake is used as the yardstick for the success of each FFE.

Recently, researchers such as (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2001a; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Oliver, 2000) have shown a growing interest in uptake as an indication of SLA. Ellis et al. (2001a) argue that there are theoretical grounds for believing that uptake might contribute to acquisition. Lyster (1998) suggests that one of the ways that uptake facilitates acquisition is by "providing opportunities for learners to proceduralize target language knowledge already internalized in declarative form" (Lyster, 1998, p. 191). In other words, learners would produce higher levels of accuracy and increased

fluency once language forms and use are internalized and automatized. For the purpose of this research, the frequency and success of uptake were calculated in relation to linguistic focus, type of FFEs, source, complexity and directness of feedback. The FFEs were then categorized into three types, as distinguished by Ellis et al. (2001a, p. 295), as shown below.

Type A: (reactive) Responding FFE: an episode in which one participant (usually the teacher) responds to an utterance produced by another participant (usually a student) that is problematic either because its meaning is not clear or because it contains a linguistic error.

Type B: (preemptive) Student-initiated FFE: an episode in which a student initiates a focus on a specific linguistic feature because of a gap in his/her knowledge. Student-initiated FFEs typically began with a question of some kind.

Type C: (preemptive) Teacher-initiated FFE: an episode in which a teacher initiates a focus on a specific linguistic feature because she thinks the feature may be problematic to the students. Typically, this was achieved by a teacher query.

Pretest and Posttest

A pretest was administered to the students in both the treatment and control groups prior to the research. Then the same test was given as a posttest at the end of the research.

The pretest and post test were administered to gauge the students' ability to use the past simple tense and past perfect tense in oral communication. The test takes the form of a jigsaw reading activity (see Appendix A). Students got into groups of four. Then, the teacher gave each group a story which had been cut into four different parts and each member of the group got one part of the story. After spending 3 minutes reading their texts, the students had to tell each other their parts of the story, without referring to the texts. The student who thought he had the first part starts first, followed by the student who thought he had the second part and so on. Their oral production was tape-recorded. The number of correct uses of the past simple and past perfect

forms was then tabulated.

Statistical Analyses

T-test for Independent Samples

The t-test for independent samples was used to determine if there was a significant difference in the pretest means of the two groups at 5% level of significance. Then the same test was used with the posttest results to determine if there was a significant difference in the accuracy of the past simple and past perfect produced in an oral communication test between the control group and the treatment group.

It is recognized that a factorial design with several treatment and control groups and multiple posttests would yield better informed and more reliable results. However, due to time constraint and the relatively small scale nature of the study, data were collected from only one control group, one treatment group, using one pretest and one posttest.

Chi-square Tests

Raw frequencies as well as percentages were calculated for the coding categories based on the characteristics of the FFEs. The descriptive statistics for uptake and successful uptake in the treatment group are presented. All inferential statistics were calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 10.0. Since the data consisted of frequency counts of categorical data, a chi-square analysis was performed on the raw frequencies in order to compare the distribution of uptake and successful uptake in the treatment group. An alpha level of $p < 0.05$ was set for all chi-square tests.

Results

T-test for Independent Samples

TABLE 4
Results of Independent t-test Analysis Pretest

Control group			Treatment group			<i>p</i>
N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
43	6.28	1.79	47	6.38	1.62	0.24

$P < 0.05$

Results of Independent t-test Analysis Posttest

Control group			Treatment group			<i>p</i>
N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
43	6.42	1.12	47	7.15	1.69	0.02

$P < 0.05$

The pretest results, as shown in table 4, indicate that there is no significant difference in the results of the pretest between the control group and treatment group with a *p* value of 0.24 and means of 6.28 (control group) and 6.38 (treatment group). However, the posttests show a significant statistical difference with a *p* value of 0.02. This result suggests that the treatment group outperformed the control group with an average score of 7.15 in contrast to an average score of 6.42 in the control group. One may assume that if all other factors were equal, the use of focus on form instruction would yield greater accuracy in the use of the past simple and past perfect tense in oral production.

Chi- square Tests

TABLE 5
Frequency of Uptake (Successful and Unsuccessful)

	Frequency of Uptake	Percent
Uptake	72	69.9
Successful	(43)	(59.7)
Unsuccessful	(29)	(40.3)
No Uptake	31	30.1
Total	103	100.0

Table 5 shows the frequency of successful and unsuccessful uptake in the 8 hour meaning-focused lessons in the treatment group. Out of 103 FFEs, there were 72 (69.9%) instances of uptake, and there was no uptake in 31 (30.1%) FFEs either because there was no opportunity for uptake or students did not in any way indicate understanding of the problematic linguistic form. Out of the 72 uptakes, 43 (59.7%) were successful and 29 (40.3%) were not successful. Successful uptake is indicated by students' ability to incorporate the problematic linguistic form in their speech usually in their last move in the FFEs. By comparison, Lyster and Ranta (1997) reported a lower level of uptake. Only 55% of their teachers' feedback moves resulted in uptake with 27% being successful. However, Ellis et al. (2002a) reported 73.9% of uptake with 74.1% of the uptake being successful.

TABLE 6
Frequency and Success of Uptake According to Linguistic Focus

Linguistic focus	Frequency of FFEs	Frequency of Uptake	Uptake	
			Successful	Unsuccessful
Past simple	23	16 (73.9%)	11 (68.8%)	5 (31.2%)
Past perfect	18	11 (61.1%)	6 (54.5%)	5 (45.5%)
Other grammatical items	30	18 (60.0%)	8 (44.4%)	10 (55.6%)
Vocabulary	20	16 (80.0%)	11 (68.8%)	5 (31.2%)
Pronunciation	12	11 (91.7%)	7 (63.6%)	4 (36.4%)
<i>n</i>	103	72	43	29

Table 6 indicates that grammar figured prominently in the FFEs. This is

probably due to the fact that it was a planned focus on form lesson, with the past simple and past perfect being the targeted forms. There were 41 FFEs that dealt with these two grammatical forms while 30 centered around other grammatical items which included prepositions, the past continuous tense, present perfect tense, logical connectors and articles. There were 21 FFEs that dealt with vocabulary and only 8 FFEs and 3 FFEs focused on pronunciation and spelling respectively.

Pronunciation recorded a high frequency of uptake at 91.7%, followed by vocabulary at 80.0%. However, the differences in the frequency of uptake according to grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5.11$, $p = 0.08$) at 5% level of significance. The differences in rate of successful uptake according to grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation were relatively small and not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.94$, $p = 0.63$).

It is interesting to note that even though the target items in the planned focus on form were the past simple and past perfect, these two tenses only account for 41 out of 103 FFEs. This means that more than 50% of the FFEs dealt with other grammatical items, vocabulary and pronunciation. This further proves that planned focus on form could result in a substantial amount of focus on linguistic aspects other than the ones targeted for.

TABLE 7
Frequency and Success of Uptake According to Type of FFE

Type of FFE	Frequency of FFEs	Frequency of Uptake	Uptake	
			Successful	Unsuccessful
Type A (Responding FFE)	48	29 (60.4%)	17(58.6%)	12 (41.4%)
Type B (Student-initiated FFE)	32	27 (84.4%)	18 (66.7%)	9 (33.3%)
Type C (Teacher-initiated FFE)	23	16 (69.6%)	8 (50.0%)	8 (50.0%)
n	103	72		
df	2	2		
χ^2	5.24	1.19		
p	0.07	0.55		

Table 7 shows the amount of uptake in the different types of FFEs. Uptake

was most frequent in responding FFEs. However, the level of uptake was notably lower (60.4%) compared to student-initiated FFEs (84.4%). However, the differences were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5.24$, $p = 0.07$) at 5% level of significance. Students were most likely to indicate understanding of linguistic form in student-initiated FFEs with 84.4% of student-initiated FFE resulting in uptake, followed by teacher-initiated FFEs at 69.6% and least likely in responding FFEs at 60.4%. In comparison, Ellis et al. (2002a) found that the highest uptake occurred in student-initiated FFEs (83.6% of uptake) and least likely in teacher-initiated FFEs (26.8%), with uptake also high in responding FFEs (75.5%).

Based on Table 7, successful uptake occurred most frequently in student-initiated FFEs with 66.7% of all uptake moves successful, and the least often in teacher-initiated FFEs with 50% of all uptake moves successful. However, the differences are relatively small and thus, statistically not significant ($\chi^2 = 1.19$, $p = 0.55$).

TABLE 8
Frequency and Success of Uptake According to Source

Type of feedback	Frequency of FFEs	Frequency of Uptake	Uptake	
			Successful	Unsuccessful
Negotiation of meaning	78	52 (66.7%)	28 (53.8%)	24 (46.2%)
Negotiation of form	25	20 (80.0%)	17 (85.0%)	3 (15.0%)
<i>n</i>	103	72		
<i>df</i>	1	1		
χ^2	1.60	5.98		
<i>p</i>	0.21	0.01		
<i>d</i>	13.3%	31.2%		

Table 8 indicates that there were more than three times as many episodes involving negotiation of meaning as negotiation of form. However, uptake was more likely to occur in episodes involving negotiation of form ($d = 13.3%$). However, the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.21$).

The type of negotiation had a significant effect on success of uptake. In negotiation of meaning, out of 43 uptake moves, 28 (53.8%) were successful.

Negotiation of form showed a notably higher level of success with 17 (85.0%) out of 20 uptake moves. The difference was statistically significant ($d = 31.2\%$, $p = 0.01$).

TABLE 9
Frequency and Success of Uptake According to Complexity

Complexity	Frequency of FFEs	Frequency of Uptake	Uptake	
			Successful	Unsuccessful
Simple	62	37 (59.7%)	15 (40.5%)	22 (59.5%)
Complex	41	35 (85.4%)	28 (71.4%)	7 (28.6%)
n	103	72		
<i>df</i>	1	1		
χ^2	7.71	114.6		
<i>p</i>	0.01	0.00		
<i>d</i>	25.7%	30.9%		

Based on Table 9, the majority of the FFEs were simple. However, uptake was more likely in complex FFEs ($d = 25.7\%$), a difference that was statistically significant ($p = 0.01$). This would mean that FFEs that involved several exchanges would more likely result in uptake than FFEs with a single exchange.

Uptake was also more likely to be successful in complex rather than simple FFEs. The difference is notably high at 30.9%. This difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.00$).

Discussion

The results in this study seem to indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in the accurate production of the past simple tense and past perfect tense between the treatment group and control group. The treatment group produced much greater frequency of accurate forms than the control group. The finding would suggest that using focus on form instruction would result in greater accuracy of grammar forms in oral communication. This result concurs with the research by Doughty and Varela (1998) on the

use of planned focus on form to produce greater accuracy in expressing past and conditional past during the reporting of experiments conducted in Science classes. Results of their study indicate that the focus on form, which was concentrated and yet not overt, was far more superior to meaning-focused instruction alone in facilitating accuracy in the use of the targeted forms, suggesting that it is indeed possible to have a dual focus on form and meaning.

The findings that specific characteristics of FFEs result in significantly high rates of uptake and success of uptake suggest that these characteristics could be usefully incorporated into classroom focus on form. Complexity of uptake and source of uptake were found to be especially significant in producing successful uptake. For the source variable, code-related FFEs resulted in significantly higher successful uptake than meaning-related FFEs. One possible reason is that negotiation of forms result in more definite and specific outcomes than negotiation of meaning. Another possibility is that learners were more likely to notice forms in code-related FFEs because their attention was not distracted by an attempt to negotiate meaning. This explanation would be supported by VanPatten's (1990) claim that students have a difficult time processing both meaning and form at the same time.

Results from the data collected could have implications on curriculum development as well as teaching methodologies adopted by teachers. Results from the t-test for independent samples have shown that for this group of students focus on form instruction would have positive effects on the accuracy of targeted grammar forms in an oral production test. Investigating the rate of uptake and the success of uptake for each characteristic of FFE is essential in helping teachers adopt focus on form instruction effectively to facilitate language uptake. It is interesting to note that even in planned focus on form lessons, a substantial number of FFEs centered around other grammatical forms and linguistic items, and that some characteristics of FFEs would have more significant influence on rate of uptake and success of uptake than others.

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Appendix A. Materials used for Pretest and Posttest

Instructions for students

- ❖ Get into groups of 4.
- ❖ Each member of each group gets one part of a story.
- ❖ Spend 3 minutes reading your part of the story.
- ❖ You will be reassigned to new groups with each group member having read a different part of the story.
- ❖ Then, without looking at your text, tell the other members of your group your part of the story. The student who thinks she/he has the first part of the story starts first, followed by the student who thinks she/he has the second part, and so on.

Part 1

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who raised cattle and grew corn. He lived in a farmhouse with his wife, their baby girl and a large dog. The family was basically happy, but every morning, the farmer left for the fields, grumbling about how hard he had to work. One night the farmer said to his wife, "I'm exhausted from working on the farm all day. I wish I could do some women's work." His wife looked at him with a quizzical smile and asked, "Why do you say that, dear?" "Because all you do is stay at home all day and play with the baby," the farmer said. "I, on the other hand, must feed the cattle and hoe the corn and do all sorts of back-breaking work." "Very well," said the woman, "tomorrow morning I will go to the fields and you will stay at home and do women's work."

Part 2

After breakfast the next morning, the woman took the farmer's hoe and walked out to the cornfields. "Have a nice day and don't forget to feed the cattle!" the happy farmer called after her from the front porch. As he returned to go back to the house, he heard a loud crash in the kitchen. He ran to the kitchen and saw that the dog had knocked the frying pan off the stove. The baby was laughing and rolling in the spilled sausage grease, while the dog licked everything in sight – the pan, the

floor, the stove, and the baby. The farmer yelled at the dog and grabbed it by the collar and dragged it outside as it began to howl. The baby was startled by her father's yelling and began to cry. The farmer came back to the kitchen, all covered with dog hair, and picked up the greasy, crying baby to give her a bath.

Part 3

The farmer had just begun to wash the baby when he heard the dog barking and the chickens squawking out in the yard. He ran outside to see why the animals were making such a fuss, and there he saw a skunk in the chicken coop. At the moment the skunk got annoyed and sprayed them all – the dog, the chickens, and the farmer – with his foul-smelling scent. The dog howled and the farmer began to yell and cough violently. As he ran back to the house to wash the terrible odor from his hair and skin, the farmer realized that he had left the baby sitting in a tub of soapy water. He ran to the bathroom, but the baby was gone and there was water all over the floor. He followed a trail of puddles down the hall and out through the back door of the farm house.

Part 4

There he found the soapy baby happily rolling in the dirt with the dog licking her face once more. The foul-smelling farmer sat on the back step with his head hanging and dog hair clinging to his body as he began to cry. Just at that moment the farmer's wife came back to the house for lunch. As she walked into the yard going toward the house, she could see the broken eggs in the chicken coop. At the back of the house, she found the dirty baby rolling in the mud with the smelly dog. The woman looked at her sobbing husband and then glanced through the window into the kitchen, where the floor was covered with water and sausage grease. Then she smiled and set down her hoe and asked, "When will lunch be ready, dear?"

Adapted from Bailey, K (1998). *Learning About Assessment; Dilemmas, Decisions, and Directions*. Newbury House: Heinle & Heinle.

Appendix B. Transcription conventions

Symbol	Meaning
S or any initial except T	Student
T	Teacher
(laugh)	Extra information
?	Rising intonation
....	Falling intonation
-	Interrupted speech