

The Effect of Focus on Form Instruction on Taiwanese EFL College Students' Learning of Possessive Pronouns

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study investigated the effect of focus on form instruction on the learning of possessive pronouns by Taiwanese EFL students. The participants were 99 first-year students enrolled in the daytime program of nursing department at an institute of technology in Taiwan. The two intact classes assigned into the experimental and the control group received two different kinds of instruction. As the experimental group received a text, in which all possessive pronouns were enhanced in bold to increase the saliency, the control group had the same text without any enhancement. A pretest and a posttest were conducted to compare the two groups' performances before and after the instruction. The results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the posttest task ($M = 6.31$ and $M = 4.96$ respectively). In addition, the experimental group improved more than the control group did. It is suggested that input enhancement had a positive effect on the participants' learning of possessive pronouns.

Key words: focus on form instruction, input enhancement, possessive pronouns

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I. Introduction

The inconsistency between language learners' linguistic knowledge and communicative ability has led to a paradigm shift in language teaching approaches. During the past few decades, opinions have been mixed regarding the role of teaching grammar. As Yip (1994) pointed out, "grammar teaching has been in and out of language methodologies following the pendulum swing from grammar driven audiolingual methods to communicative approaches which consider grammar as something peripheral" (p.123-124). In the 1970s, language educators and practitioners began to recognize a general problem in language learning: students knew the rules of linguistic usage and had good performance on written tests, but were unable to handle communicative needs outside classrooms. Since then, a widespread criticism against form-oriented language instructions, such as Grammar Translation Method, Audiolingual Method, and Total Physical Response, promoted a shift in preference toward meaning-oriented pedagogies. Language teachers began to urge the importance of communicative competence and adopt meaning-oriented pedagogies, such as Communicative Teaching, Immersion Instruction, the Natural Approach, and Content-based Instruction. In these meaning-oriented approaches, fluency plays a more important role than accuracy does; authentic language use receives central attention instead of language usage; explicit teaching of formal aspects of language is not encouraged. A meaning-oriented curriculum is to be achieved by giving attention to students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world.

Meaning-oriented approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching, indeed have been experiencing its popularity for a long period. At the same time, whether to incorporate grammar instruction into language classrooms have been widely discussed and hotly debated by researchers, such as Krashen (1982) and Long (1988). Like every other method previously proposed, meaning-oriented approaches have their limitations. Some researchers, such as Harley and Swain (1984), Lightbown and Spada (1990), Swain and Lapkin (1982, 1986) found that when instruction focuses on meaning to the virtual exclusion of formal aspects of language, learners may fail to reach high levels of linguistic knowledge. The observations have enlightened researchers and practitioners in this sense: adopting a single-sided teaching method, either communicative-based, or grammatical-based, is leading us nowhere other than deciding between alternative approaches.

Current views of second language classroom methodology support the idea that success of language teaching should be achieved in a balanced manner (e.g., Doughty,

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1998; Long, 1991; Long & Robinson, 1998). It is suggested that, in second or foreign language classroom, teachers should adopt an alternative way between the traditional approach which emphasizes accurate production of language forms, and the communicative approach which focuses on promoting meaningful communication in real contexts. One approach proposed to reach the dual need is focus on form instruction (Long, 1991; Long & Robinson, 1998), an approach for drawing learners' attention to linguistic form in a meaningful context.

Many studies have supported the idea that students who learn English as second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) can benefit from focusing their attention to linguistic features while attending to the message conveyed as well (Alanen, 1995; Doughty, 1991; Doughty & Williams, 1998b; Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson & Doughty, 1995; Lee, 2007; Long, 1990; White, 1998; Wong, 2001). Several studies (Lee, 2007; Wong, 2001) have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of focus on form instruction in Asian contexts. Nevertheless, it still leaves open spaces which deserve to be discussed, such as on various techniques, learners, and contexts. Especially rare studies emphasized EFL students in Taiwan where English learners are facing greater challenges. A glance through the past decades of language learning practices reveals that English learners in Taiwan are pursuing complex learning needs: to have linguistic knowledge to perform well on the Entrance Exam, as well to acquire communicative competence to fulfill communicative needs outside classrooms. However, it is not surprising to see that the contents and the pedagogies of the English courses in Taiwan, particularly at junior and senior school level, are still heavily influenced by the Entrance Examination. As a result, traditional approaches, such as the Grammar Translation Method, continue to be a prevailing method in most of the English classrooms to prepare students for the Entrance exams. These approaches are found to be less satisfying as the earth has become a global village. As Taiwanese students are experiencing a rapid increase in the use of English, communicative competence has become a required and necessary skill for job and social status advancement. As a consequence of this need for excellent communication skills, the introduction of focus on form instruction, promoting accuracy and fluency at the same time, should not be ignored by English teachers and learners in Taiwan.

Research question

This study was designed to increase the perceptual salience of a target linguistic feature. Typographical enhancement, which involved the manipulation of **bolding**, was selected for investigation because it was expected to draw the learner's attention to the target form within a communicative activity less obtrusively than some focus on form techniques (Doughty & Williams, 1998b). Accordingly, in order to examine whether focus on form instruction involving input enhancement has any effects on the

EFL junior college students' performances on a specific grammar feature, the following question was developed:

What is the effect of focus on form instruction involving input enhancement within a communicative context on the EFL college students' learning on the target form, as measured by the pretest and the posttest tasks?

II. Literature Review

Focus on form

Focus on form is an instructional way which draws learners' attention to linguistic forms within communicative contexts. It requires a prerequisite engagement in meaning before achieving successful learning of linguistic forms. The term was firstly proposed by Long (1991) who stated that "focus on form...overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (p. 45-46). Long and Robinson (1998) further expanded its definition and claimed that "focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features - by the teacher and/or one or more students - triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production" (p. 23).

Focus on form is different from focus on form*S*, which is another term appeared in the literature. Given the fact that confusion is easily generated, Long (1991) made a comparison to distinguish focus on form from focus on form*S*, such as grammar instruction, formal instruction, form-focused instruction and code-focused instruction. According to his explanation, in the focus on form, learners' attention is drawn to the target form as the linguistic forms arise incidentally in a meaningful and communicative context. On the other hand, the grammatical features are treated in isolation in the traditional notion of focus on form*S*. Furthermore, Doughty and Williams (1998a) stated that focus on form and focus on form*S* are not opposites in the way of focus on meaning or communication. As they claimed, "focus on form *entails* a focus on formal elements of language, whereas focus on form*S* is *limited* to such a focus, and focus on meaning *excludes* it" (p.4).

To date back its origin, Long (1991) stated that focus on form was motivated by the Interaction Hypothesis, which was proposed by Long (1981, 1983, 1996). Underlying the Interaction Hypothesis is the belief that language development can be achieved through interaction, which promotes "negotiation", or "negotiation for meaning". This type of interaction can occur between learners and other speakers, or between learners and written texts (Long, 1997, as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998). In the process of interaction, the learner would make an effort to come to an

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understanding of the messages from the other speakers or written texts by simplifying the contents in order to make the input more comprehensible. Therefore, Long (1991) emphasized that focus on form should ideally occur as part of negotiation for meaning, as Doughty and William (1998) described focus on form “entails a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can be expected to be effective” (p.3).

To further explain how second language structures may be acquired through negotiation for meaning and how this process may lead to language development, Long (1996) made a statement as follows:

It is proposed that environmental contributions to acquisition are mediated by selective attention and the learner's developing L2 processing capacity, and that these resources are brought together most usefully, although not exclusively, during negotiation for meaning. Negative feedback obtained during negotiation work or elsewhere may be facilitative of language development, at least for vocabulary, morphology and language-specific syntax, and essential for learning certain specifiable L1-L2 contrasts (Long, 1996, p.414).

This new account of the Interaction Hypothesis entailed that attention also plays an important role in focus on form, in addition to negotiation or communication. Focus on form advocators supported that conscious attention is necessary for formal items in the input to become intake. This stand is consistent with the views of other researchers, such as Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1985), Schmidt (1995), and Pica (1998). As Schmidt claimed “what learners notice in the input is what becomes intake for learning” (p.20), Pica stressed that “a more direct way for learners to obtain difficult-to-access data is through instructional intervention, often of a structured and explicit nature” (p.20). Furthermore, Rutherford and Sharwood Smith provided some practical examples of techniques to draw learners' attention:

There are many ways of drawing attention to form without indulging in metalinguistic discussion. A simple example would be the use of typographical conventions such as underlining or capitalizing a particular grammatical surface feature, where you merely ask the learners to pay attention to anything that is underlined or capitalized. Another example would be deliberate exposure of the learner to an artificially large number of instances of some target structure in the language on the assumption that the very high frequency of the structure in question will attract the learner's attention to the relevant formal regularities (Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1985, p. 271).

The examples mentioned above are known as input enhancement, which is one

of the important methods in the focus on form instruction and is frequently used as a strategy to draw the learner's attention to a specific linguistic feature. According to Sharwood Smith's (1991) definition, input enhancement refers to the "deliberate attempt to make specific features of input more salient in order to draw learners' attention to these features" (p.118). In this method, teachers can do some modification to make the target form, which is a perceived problem, more salient to direct the learner pay attention to the feature. Manipulation of input enhancement, such as *italics*, **bolding**, enlargement, underlining, and input flooding are examples of such attention-betters. The first four techniques refer to using typographic tactics to make the target feature more salient, while the last one means increasing number of times of encountering the target feature.

In addition to input activities, output production can also promote noticing. As proposed by Swain (1995) whose theoretical standpoint is that without pushed output, the learners who engage in input comprehension are not guaranteed further processing of linguistic form that leads to acquisition. In other words, when the learners produce output, they are provided with opportunities to notice the gap between their initial production and teacher's corrective reformulation. As well it will help the learners recognize what they want to use in production, but can not correctly use in the target language. This process was defined by Swain (1998) as "noticing a hole in one's interlanguage" (p. 66). In other words, the learners engaging in production activity are expected to consciously recognize their linguistic problems; therefore, their attention may be directed to the relevant inputs.

Among output activities, negative feedback is one possible technique to implicitly raise learners' awareness to the errors in their speech production without interrupting the flow of communication. As referring to negative feedback, it means the process of negotiation for meaning between the learner and the more proficient interlocutor, such as the teacher. As the learner does not perform like the teacher does, the teacher may intervene to direct the learner's attention to the certain form by using corrective recast, which is a way of corrective reformulation of utterances that preserve the speaker's intended meaning (Long & Robinson, 1998). Besides, negative evidence, as Pica (1998) suggested, includes various techniques, such as rephrasing and expansions which can "serve to draw a learner's attention to the fact of incorrectness, can thereby trigger learner-internal mechanism" (p. 301).

To be more specific, Doughty and Williams (1998b) made an analysis of the features of focus on form tasks, as shown in Table 1 which ranged in terms of the degree to which the focus on form interrupts the flow of communication on the basis of obtrusiveness, as shown in Table 2.

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Table 1. Features of focus on form tasks (Doughty & Williams, 1998b, p. 258)

Learner attention	± directed (vs. attracted)
Learner involvement	± learner manipulation of form
Learning condition	± deductive
Integration	± integrated (vs. sequential)
Inclusion of metalinguistic information	± metalinguistic
Modes	± input ± output
Provides	± teacher/materials ± other learners

Note: ± refers to varying at degrees

Table 2. Degree of obtrusiveness of focus on form
(Excerpts from Doughty & Williams, 1998b, p. 258)

	Unobtrusive -----Obtrusive
Input flood	x
Input enhancement	x
Negotiation	x
Recast	x
Interaction enhancement	x
Dictogloss	x
Consciousness-raising tasks	x
Input processing	x

Empirical studies on effect of input enhancement

In the following section, three studies examining the effects of input enhancement were reviewed. The researchers employed various techniques to make target linguistic features more salient to learners engaging in communicative activities. Then they examine how this method may affect language learners' learning and production of linguistic features.

Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson and Doughty (1995) explored the effects of input enhancement on learners' noticing and production of linguistic features. The participants were native speakers of English ($N = 14$) enrolled in a Spanish class at Georgetown University. During the instruction, the instructor provided a sample text, which was a narration of the story - "Little Red Riding Hood," as a stimulus for the writing task which followed. The experimental group received the text in which all the target forms, preterit and imperfect verb forms, were highlighted by using underlining and a different font; in addition, the preterit verbs were shadowed and the imperfect verbs were bolded to make them more salient to learners. On the other hand,

the control group took the same text with no typographical enhancement. Think-aloud protocols were collected during a subsequent task in which participants were asked to describe a series of pictures in Spanish similar to the sample text they received prior. The analysis of the data showed that the protocols of the experimental group contained more episodes involving the use of preterit and imperfect verbs than did the control group. In addition, the experimental group also produced more target forms in their written work. Accordingly, the study of Jourdenais et al., provided language teachers evidence that manipulation of input enhancement can be effective to direct learners' attention to target forms of the second language. As well students who received enhanced texts may lead to more subsequent second language production of the forms.

In the empirical studies of White (1998), an investigation was conducted to examine the effectiveness of increasing the perceptual salience of a linguistic feature on ESL elementary students' language acquisition. The target form was third person singular possessive determiners, which were found particularly difficult to French students. The participants ($N = 86$) were ESL students enrolled in the sixth grade at a French elementary school in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. While attending to the 10-hour instructional sessions extended over 5 months, the participants were divided into three groups: two experimental groups and one control group. The first and the second experimental group received learning materials in which all third person singular pronouns possessive determiners were enhanced through enlargement and different combinations of the following techniques: bolding, italics and underling. In addition to input enhancement, the first experimental was further exposed to an extensive reading and listening activities. On the other hand, the control group received the same learning materials, but the target form appeared in the texts was not enhanced. At the beginning of the experiment, all of the participants were engaged in a baseline test to ensure there were no significant differences among them at the outset. To assure implicit teaching, all of the instructors were not allowed to teach the rules about the target forms during the instructional sessions. The results showed that initially the two experimental groups improved significantly and outperformed the control group; however, the control group caught up in the second posttest. Accordingly, White's studies reminded language teachers that drawing learners' attention to specific linguistic features may have positive effects on short-time acquisition with this feature, but may not be sufficient to long-term retention, especially dealing with L1 – L2 contrasts. Therefore, combination of focus on form involving input enhancement and other explicit information may be necessary, as language teachers would like to promote not only short-term, but also long-term acquisition of linguistic acquisition.

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Differing from the two studies mentioned above, Lee (2007) sought to explore the EFL context with Korean EFL participants ($N = 259$). This research examined the effects of making language features salient on learners' reading comprehension and learning of passive forms. To narrow down the focus into learning of passive forms, only the result of this aspect was further reviewed and discussed as follows. In this quasi-experimental study, Lee recruited high-school juniors from 12 intact classes and randomly divided them into four groups. The participants had previously been taught through explicit rule presentations, but still failed to reach a satisfying level on their pretests. During four 50-minute English class sessions over a 2-week period, they were exposed to four different types of treatments: enhanced and familiar text (+E/+F), enhanced and unfamiliar text (+E/-F), unenhanced and familiar text (-E/+F), and unenhanced and unfamiliar text (-E/-F). The results revealed that the participants with enhanced texts (the two +E groups) performed better than those with the unenhanced text (both two -E groups) in the form correction task. Furthermore, when comparing pretest to posttest score changes, the enhanced groups (the two +E groups) also improved more than did the unenhanced groups (the two -E groups). The findings of Lee revealed that manipulation of printing in bold had positive effects on Korean students' acquisition of passive voice in English, as measured by an error correction task. This may inspired some EFL teachers who believed in that explicit teaching the rules of the grammar may not be the only or the best way to teach grammar.

III. Methodology

In the following section, the participants, instruments, assessment measures and procedures were presented.

Subjects

The participants in this quasi-experimental study were 99 EFL junior college students from two intact classes at an institute of technology in the southern part of Taiwan. During the research, the participants were first-year students enrolled in the daytime five-year program of nursing department. They were enrolled in a 3-credit general English course, as one of their required courses. Besides learning experiences in cram schools, they were expected to receive at least three years of English learning prior during junior high school.

In order to ensure that there was no significant difference between the two groups of participants in terms of their English proficiency, an independent *t*-test was administered. Their English scores gained from the entrance examination were collected and calculated by the statistical software. As shown in Table 3, the descriptive statistics showed that the first group, assigned as the experimental group

demonstrated a mean score of 20.29, $SD = 13.90$, while the second group, assigned as the control group, gained a mean score of 21.58, $SD = 15.14$.

Table 3. Summary for the Entrance Exam Scores of the Two Groups

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
experimental	49	20.29	13.90
Control	50	21.58	15.14

What followed was the examination of the Levene's test for equality for variances, as shown in Table 4. It indicated that the two groups have approximately equal variance on the dependent variable, as the value of significance is more than .05 ($F = .54, p > .05$).

Finally, the results of the *t*-test for equality of means were checked. Based on the results of the Levene's test described above, the figures on the top row (as equal variances assumed) were analyzed. The findings indicated that the two groups were not statistically different from one another in terms of their general English proficiency, $t(97) = -.44, p > .05$.

Table 4. Summary of the Independent *t*-test for the Entrance Exam Scores of the Two Groups

	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>MD</i>
Equal Variances Assumed	.54	.47	-0.44	97	.66	-1.29
Equal Variances not Assumed			-0.44	96.59	.66	-1.29

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Treatment

This study was implemented by using an implicit focus on form technique –input enhancement. Therefore, the variable treatment was the manipulation of input enhancement. There were two instructional conditions: the experimental group received an enhanced text as their instructional material, while the control group received an unenhanced instructional text. These instructional techniques were chosen by the following considerations.

Input enhancement

The theoretical construct of focus on form is its dual requirement: the focus must occur in conjunction with communicative interaction. Accordingly, implicit focus on form techniques are potentially effective, because the aim is to add attention to form to a primarily communicative task rather than to depart from an already communicative goal in order to discuss a linguistic feature. Therefore, typographical enhancement, manipulating of **bolding** was selected for the investigation. In addition,

input enhancement presents a feature of unobtrusiveness, which means avoidance of interrupting the flow of the communicative task. According to the analysis of Doughty and Williams (1998b), input enhancement is expected to direct the learner's attention to the target forms more explicitly than input flooding but less explicitly than rule explanation.

Target form – the possessive pronoun

The target form for this study was the possessive pronoun, which acts as a marker of possession and defines who owns a particular object or person. The possessive pronoun, which is always used to replace a noun, includes "mine," "yours," "hers," "his," "its," "ours," and "theirs". It can function as a subject complement or the subject of the sentence.

In each of the following sentences, the **highlighted** word is a possessive pronoun:

The smallest gift is **mine**.

(The possessive pronoun, "mine", functions as a subject complement.)

His is on the kitchen counter.

(The possessive pronoun, "his", acts as the subject of the sentence.)

The possessive pronoun is similar to the possessive adjective, like "my", "her," and "their," but these two forms are different and frequently result in confusion. The examples of these two forms are shown as follows:

Vicky's hair is brown. **Mine** is black. (possessive pronoun.)

My stereo is more expensive than **your** computer. (possessive adjective)

Even though the possessive pronoun is not one of the most complex forms leading to learning difficulties for EFL students in Taiwan, it is frequently ignored because it does not cause serious problems in communication.

Accordingly, the possessive pronoun is regarded as an appropriate form in focus on form instruction. As Harley (1993, as cited in Williams and Evans, 1998) suggested that the candidates for effective focus on form are those that:

1. Differ in nonobvious ways from the learners' first language
2. Are not salient because they are irregular or infrequent in the input
3. Are not important for successful communication
4. Are likely to be misinterpreted or misanalyzed by learners (Harley, 1993, as cited in Williams and Evans, 1998, p. 140)

The possessive pronoun meets the last two criteria suggested by Harley. Hence, it was chosen as the target form in this study.

Instruments

The pretest/posttest tasks

The grammar tests used in the pretest and posttest (See Appendix A and B respectively) were developed by the researchers and their reliability and validity were evaluated through the following steps.

First, the contents of the two tests were reviewed by three experts (See Appendix C for background information). These experts ranked each question with a 5-Likert scale (1 = very appropriate; 2 = appropriate; 3 = no comment; 4 = inappropriate; 5 = very inappropriate). As they found the item inappropriate or very inappropriate, specific explanations or suggestions should be provided for future improvement. The results (See Appendix D) collected from the three experts indicated that about 97 percent of the items in the pretest were ranked very appropriate or appropriate, as 93 percent of the items in the posttest were ranked very appropriate or appropriate, as they were used to test the participants' knowledge on possessive pronouns. Therefore, the content validity of the pretest and the posttest were both accepted.

Second, the researchers modified the pretest and the posttest based on the comments from the experts and established the final version of the tests. Each of the tests consisted of 10 questions: five fill-in-the-blank questions and five error recognition questions. The participants were given one point for each correct answer. The researchers decided to use the two tasks mentioned above because the opportunity of random guessing is relatively lower than it may occur within other tasks, such as multiple choice questions.

Finally, the researchers recruited 45 students to take the tests for a purpose to evaluate the reliability of the tests. These participants shared a similar background to the participants in this study: they were all first-year junior college students from the same department and college with the participants in this study. The researchers invited them to take the pretest and posttest during their English class session. Afterward, their scores were collected and analyzed for internal consistency. The results showed that internal consistency of the pretest and the posttest were 0.705 and 0.777 respectively (See Appendix D). Therefore, these two tests as a whole were reliable according to Wu and Tu's (2005) criterion.

Enhanced/unenhanced texts

Two versions of reading texts (See examples in Appendix E and F) were prepared and modified by the researchers in advance. In order to ensure the "understanding" of the form in addition to preventing extracting the form from the context, the researchers decided to include simple rule explanation as hints in the text. For example: I borrowed this bicycle from my brother. It's not **mine** (=my bicycle).

The experimental group received the enhanced material, in which all of the

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possessive pronouns and the hints were enhanced visually with the technique of **bolding**. On the other hand, the control group received the same text, but the possessive pronouns and the hints were not enhanced.

Procedures

The data was collected during the first two weeks of the spring semester of 2008 (see Table 5). During the first session, a pretest on the target form was administered to ensure that the participants possessed knowledge of the target form at the similar level. Then the participants were provided with reading texts in the next session. At this stage, there were two instructional conditions: the experimental group received the enhanced text, as the control group received the unenhanced one. During this session, the instructor led the participants to read aloud the texts first until the participants were familiar with the pronunciation and intonation. Followed was the time of pair work, during which the participants practiced the conversation in pairs. Meanwhile, they were told they could exchange their role in the conversation. Most importantly, no explicit teaching was allowed during the instruction to avoid interrupting the flow of the communicative activities. The instructor could provide assistance to the participants in the case of failure to analyze the form by the participants. Besides, the explanation on the importance of acquiring the possessive pronoun would also be allowed. At last, the posttest was carried out one week after the reading session to measure the participants' retention of the target form.

Table 5. Overview of the Procedure

Week	Sessions	Experimental group (<i>n</i> = 49)	Control group (<i>n</i> = 50)
1st	1st	pretest	pretest
	2nd	enhanced text (+)	unenhanced texts(-)
2nd	3rd	posttest	posttest

IV. Data Analysis and Results

The pretest

In order to ensure that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of their knowledge on the possessive pronoun, an Independent *t*-test was conducted. Their scores gained from the pretest were collected and calculated by the SPSS. As shown in Table 6, the descriptive statistics showed that the experimental group gained a mean score of 4.24, *SD* = 2.31, while the control group gained a mean score of 4.14, *SD* = 2.28.

Table 6. Summary for the Pretest Scores of the Two Groups

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental	49	4.24	2.31
Control	50	4.14	2.28

Next, the result of the Levene's Test for equality for variances was examined. Like the result of Table 3, it indicated that the two groups had approximately equal variance on the dependent variable, as the value of significance was more than .05, ($F = .30, p > .05$).

Then, the result of the *t*-test for equality of means was checked. Based on the result of the Levene's test described above, the figures on the top row were analyzed (as equal variances assumed). The results indicated that the two groups were not statistically different from one another in terms of their scores gained from the pretest task, $t(97) = .23, p > .05$, even though the experimental group ($M = 4.24, SD = 2.31$) scored higher than the control group ($M = 4.14, SD = 2.28$).

Table 7. Summary of Independent *t*-test for the Pretest

	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	<i>MD</i>
Equal variances assumed	.30	.86	.23	97	.82	.10
Equal variances not assumed			.23	96.90	.82	.10

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The posttest

In order to compare the two groups' knowledge of the possessive pronoun, their mean scores retrieved from the posttest were analyzed by an independent *t*-test. As shown in Table 8, the experimental and the control groups gained a mean score of 6.31, $SD = 1.99$ and 4.96, $SD = 2.09$ respectively after the instructional treatments.

Table 8. Summary for the Posttest Scores of the Two Groups

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental	49	6.31	1.99
Control	50	4.96	2.09

Then, the result of the Levene's test for equality for variances was examined. As shown in Table 9, it indicated that the two groups had approximately equal variance on the dependent variable, as the value of significance was more than .05, ($F = .66, p > .05$).

Finally, the result of the *t*-test for equality of means was evaluated. Based on the

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result of the Levene's test described above, the statistics on the top row was analyzed (as equal variances assumed). The findings suggested that the two groups were statistically different from one another in terms of their scores gained from the posttest task $t(97) = 3.28, p < .05$. Therefore, the result of the independent t -test indicated that the experimental group ($M = 6.31, SD = 1.99$) performed better than the control group ($M = 4.96, SD = 2.09$) did, with a significant difference ($p < .05$).

Table 9. Summary of Independent t -test for the Posttest

	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>MD</i>
Equal variances assumed	.66	.80	3.28	97	.00**	1.35
Equal variances not assumed			3.28	96.93	.00**	1.35

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Comparison of the pretest-posttest change

At last, the results of the pretest and the posttest were compared to see if the participants' scores were improved after they received the different kinds of input. As shown in Table 10, the experimental group's pretest and posttest mean scores were 4.24 and 6.31 respectively. On the other hand, the mean scores of the control groups' pretest and posttest were 4.14 and 4.96 respectively.

Table 10. Summary for Paired Sample Statistics
of the Pretest-posttest Scores

Group	Tests	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental	pretest	49	4.24	2.31
	posttest	49	6.31	1.99
Control	pretest	50	4.14	2.28
	posttest	50	4.96	2.09

Table 11 showed the correlation between the two variables. It demonstrated that there was a positive correlation between the pretest and the posttest. In other words, in both of the two groups, the participants who performed well on the pretest also did well on the posttest.

Table 11. Summary for Paired Samples Correlations
of the Pretest-posttest Scores

Group	Tests	<i>n</i>	Correlation	<i>Sig.</i>
Experimental	Pretest-posttest	49	.82	.00**
Control	Pretest-posttest	50	.34	.02*

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 12 showed that both of the two groups improved from the pretest to the posttest, with a mean difference of 2.06, $SD = 1.33$ and .82, $SD = 2.52$ respectively. However, the control group gained to a lesser extent.

Table 12. Summary for Paired Samples Test of the Pretest-posttest Scores

Group	Tests	Gained Score	SD	T	df	Sig.
Experimental	Pretest-posttest	2.06	1.33	-10.85	48	.00**
Control	Pretest-posttest	0.82	2.52	-2.3	49	.03*

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

When the pretest to the posttest changes for the two groups were compared visually, as shown in Figure 1, the line of the experimental groups have noticeable steeper slopes than the control groups. Clearly, the experimental group improved more than the control did.

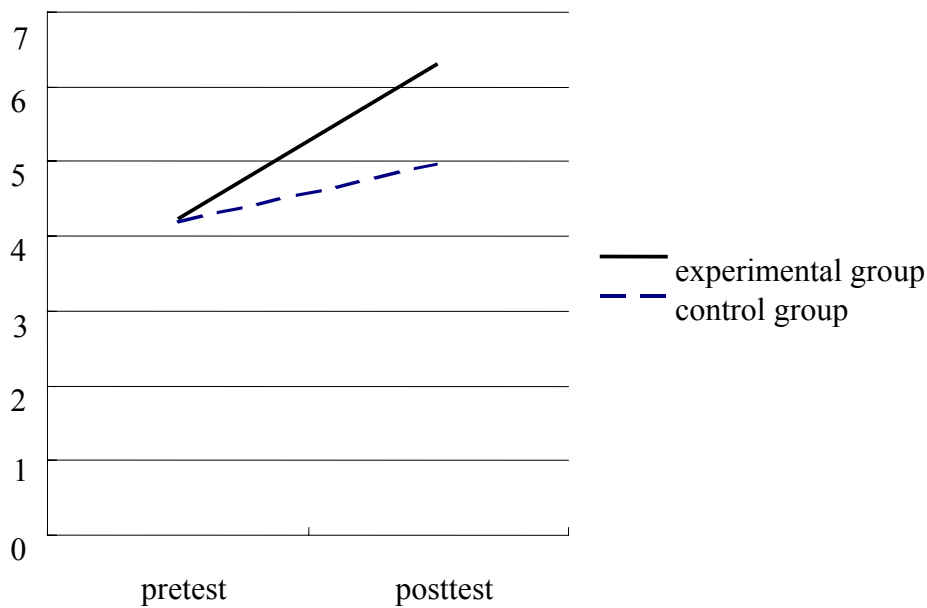


Figure 1. Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Two Groups

V. Discussion

Before the instructional treatments, the experimental and the control group presented their knowledge of possessive pronouns at similar level, as measured by the pretest with insignificant difference (as shown in Table 6 and 7). However, after being exposed to two different conditions, the experimental group gained a higher mean score from the posttest than the control did (as shown in Table 8). As well the result

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showed there was a significant difference between the two mean scores (See Table 9). Therefore, it suggested that the manipulation of input enhancement could facilitate the participants' learning of possessive pronouns. This positive finding is consistent with results of previous studies (Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson & Doughty, 1995; Lee, 2007; White, 1998), in which researchers used various techniques to make the target features more salient to learners and found these methods are useful to improve language learners' acquisition of the target forms.

In addition, by comparing the performance at the pretest and the posttest by the two groups, the results revealed that the experimental group improved more than the control group did. The experimental group improved their mean score from 4.24 to 6.31, with a mean difference of 2.06. On the other hand, the control group increased their mean score from 4.14 to 4.96. Obviously, the experimental group had a substantially greater improvement than the control group. It suggested that the input enhancement could comparatively improve the participants' knowledge of possessive pronouns.

To be more specific, it is necessary to explore other aspects affecting the learning performances of the two groups, besides statistical analysis of the test scores. Firstly, although the participants in the experimental and the control groups, had most likely received instruction on possessive pronouns during junior high school English courses, they scored below average on this form because their pretest mean scores were both less than five out of ten points. One possible reason could be that some of them did not acquire this form or some had acquired this form before but did not retain the information in the long term so that they had vague memories as taking the pretest. Hence, as some of these participants, who had partial memories of the form, received a text with all possessive pronouns were enhanced in bold, they may quickly detect these examples and retrieve their memories. As well the explanations shown after the possessive pronouns in the parenthesis with bold size could provide some help for the participants to distinguish the difference between possessive pronouns and possessive. Even though providing enhanced input will not guarantee all of the participants notice, and further process input correctly and efficiently, increasing the saliency of the target form is presumed to increase the chances that learners will attend to the form. In contrast, few participants in the control group possibly also notice the examples of possessive pronouns and recalled their previous memories of this grammatical point, so that they could improve their scores in the posttest. There is a possibility that some of them may not made the connection when their teachers attempted to direct their attention to possessive pronouns, but only focus on the conversation. Furthermore, it may be even more difficult for students who had low motivation and achievement on English learning to catch up without any explicit instruction and utilizing any other

techniques. These lower level students need more supplementary aids and additional instruction from their teachers and support from their peers than other students do. Therefore, the control group failed to improve their mean score from the pretest to the posttest, and showed as much improvement as did the experimental group.

VI. Conclusion

Learning English is a complex process. Pursuing accuracy and fluency simultaneously becomes a more complicating task. What English teachers and learners face today is a challenge of how to improve communicative competence, as well as to acquire sufficient linguistic knowledge. More and more studies (e.g., Doughty, 1998; Long, 1991; Long & Robinson, 1998) indicated that, to practice the teaching methodologies to the extreme end of the spectrum, either pure meaning-oriented or form-oriented, may not be the best solution for English learners. With reference to grammar teaching, this study offered some evidence that focus on form instruction using input enhancement technique is effective with the following results: the experimental group performed better than the control group on the posttest, as well the former group improved more than the latter one. It suggested that the manipulation of input enhancement to increase the saliency of the target grammar point is effective and facilitative to improve the participants' knowledge on possessive pronouns.

Obviously, the focus on form instruction introduced during the last decade sheds light on English teaching and learning. However, this small-scale study was conducted with a small number of people enrolled at the same school. Hence, the results may not apply to different populations or other grammar points. On the other hand, a shortcoming of this study is that the duration was too short, as the testing dates of the pretest and the posttest were too close together. Therefore, it is necessary to do a delayed posttest in the future to gain more understanding on the effect of long-term retention on possessive pronouns. In addition, it is hoped that this study may provide some inspiration to English teachers and learners and to bring more discussion on this innovative instruction. The following are some suggestions on the aspects that can be taken into consideration for future investigation.

First, it is recommended to examine the effect of focus on form instruction on various linguistic forms. As this study was conducted in a proactive manner, in which the decision of choosing the form was made in advance, future research can be done in a more reactive way. In other words, teachers can design lessons involving focus on form techniques until they perceive the linguistic problems of students. In addition, as various forms are examined, different instruction or techniques should be applied. As

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Larsen-Freeman (1995) claimed, not all grammatical structures are acquired in the same way. Therefore, the effect of focus on form may differ with the different forms. More importantly, current views encourage teachers to combine focus on form instruction with other techniques, such as rule instruction (Alanen, 1995) and output tasks (Izumi, 2002), because focus on form instruction alone is found to be insufficient for some forms to be acquired. As White (1998) warned, drawing the learners' attention to a linguistic feature may be facilitative for acquisition of the target feature; however, implicit focus on form instruction may not be adequate in the case of the forms that involve L1-L2 contrasts. Doughty and William (1998) also stated input enhancement may be more effective with adults than children because children may encounter a cognitive overload as they are still developing their reading abilities. Consequently, when choosing focus on form techniques, teachers should keep in mind all of these aspects. Perhaps a more explicit type of focus on form instruction is necessary when applying this technique in the classroom to different learners or different forms.

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Appendix A

Pretest

一. Fill in the blanks 填空 (每題一分)

請利用格子中所提供的字完成下列的句子

可能的答案有: you; your; yours; I; my; mine; he; his; him; she; her; hers; they; their; theirs; we; our; ours; it; its; it's

1. The money you stole was _____. (你所偷的錢是我的)
2. Are you sure you didn't get the wrong backpack? (你確定沒有拿錯背包嗎?)
I think it is not your backpack, it is _____. (我想那不是你的，而是他的。)
3. My car is red, but _____ is white. (我的車子是紅色的，而她的是白色的。)
4. Your house is bigger than _____. (你們的房子比我們的大。)
5. The tickets on the table are _____. (桌上的票是他們的。)

二. Error recognition 改錯 (每題一分)

下列各題中可能會出現一個錯誤，如果發現錯誤，請將錯誤的字圈起來。

6. The coke on the sofa is him. (沙發上的外套是他的。)
7. These books are theirs books. (這些書是她的。)
8. My hat is over there, and your is on the table. (我的帽子在那邊，你的在桌上。)
9. Please buy roses for your girlfriend by yourself because these are _____. I bought these flowers in the early morning.
(請你自己買玫瑰給你的女友，因為這些是我的，我一大清早就去買這些花。)
10. A: Are you sure you parents want to move to Australia?
(你確定你父母要搬去澳洲?)
B: Yes, even though Australia is not my first priority, but their.
(我確定，雖然澳洲不是我的首選，但卻是他們。)

Appendix B

Posttest

一. Fill in the blanks 填空 (每題一分)請利用提供的字完成下列的句子

可能的答案有: you; your; yours; I; my; mine; he; his; him; she; her; hers; they; their; theirs; we; our; ours; it; its; it's

1. A: I guess the biggest gift is for me. B: Don't even think about it. The biggest and the most expensive is _____.
(A:我猜這最大的禮物是給我的吧! B: 想都別想, 最大最貴的是她的。)
2. We were born in the same year. Your birthday is in March, but _____ is in August.
(我倆是同一出生的。你的生日在三月, 而我的生日是在八月)
3. My brother wants to buy a new cap because _____ is too small.
(我弟想要買一頂新的帽子, 因為他的帽子太小了。)
4. We know chicken is your favorite food, but it's not _____.
(我們知道雞肉是妳們最愛的食物, 但卻不是我們最愛的。)
5. Our campus is not as big as _____. (我們的校園不如他們的那麼大。)

二. Error recognition 改錯 (每題一分)

下列各題中可能會出現一個錯誤, 如果發現錯誤, 請將錯誤的字圈起來。

6. The coke on the table is him. (桌上的可樂是他的。)
7. I am sure this is not your fault, but their. (我確定這不是妳們的錯, 而是他們的。)
8. Our English starts at 8:00 in the morning. How about yours?
(我們的英文課在早上八點鐘開始上課, 妳們的呢?)
9. The girl you spoke to yesterday is not Jame's sister, but my.
(昨天跟你說話的女孩不是詹姆士的姊姊, 而是我的。)
10. Please do not move this bicycle because it is not your.
(請不要移動這輛腳踏車, 因為它不是你的。)

Appendix C

Background Information of the Experts

Expert 1

Title : Associate professor

1. Educational Background	Ph.D. in Education at National Pingtung University of Education
2. Specialty	TESOL; Curriculum design
3. Courses	e-learning English course Internship on English teaching General English course English reading and vocabulary

Expert 2

Title : Assistant professor

1. Educational Background	Ph.D. in Linguistics at School of German Language
2. Specialty	Linguistics
3. Courses	Applied linguistics Business English News English English conversation

Expert 3

Title : Assistant professor

1. Educational Background	Ed. D. at The University of Montana
2. Specialty	English teaching and learning Project writing Educational leadership Spanish
3. Courses	Advanced reading skills English teaching strategies Vocabulary and reading Listening Project Writing GEPT

Appendix D

I. Results of the Content Validity for the Pretest and the Posttest

Pretest

Experts	Very Appropriate	Appropriate	No Comment	Inappropriate	Very Inappropriate	Total Items
P 1	5	4	0	1	0	10
P 2	6	4	0	0	0	10
P 3	2	8	0	0	0	10
Total	13	16	0	1	0	30
Percentage	43	54	0	3	0	100

Posttest

Experts	Very Appropriate	Appropriate	No Comment	Inappropriate	Very Inappropriate	Total Items
P 1	6	2	0	2	0	10
P 2	7	3	0	0	0	10
P 3	0	10	0	0	0	10
Total	13	15	0	2	0	30
Percentage	43	50	0	7	0	100

II. Results of the Reliability Statistics for the Pretest and the Posttest

Tests	Items	Cronbach α
Pretest	10	0.705
Posttest	10	0.777

Appendix E

The Example of the Enhanced text

Dennis held a party to celebrate his birthday last Saturday. He invited his friends and classmates to his house. Nancy was one of the friends who were invited to the party. She was looking at the pictures on the around the house and felt curious about one person in the picture.

Nancy: Who is the guy next to you?

Is he your cousin?

Dennis: No, he is not **mine (=my cousin)**. He is Janet's brother.

Nancy: He is a cute guy. Could you please introduce him to me?

Dennis: mmm...

Nancy: What's wrong? Does he have any girlfriends?

Dennis: Yes, he is popular among girls, and his girlfriend is Judy.

Nancy: Who's Judy? Do you know her?

Dennis: Of course, Judy is my girlfriend's twin sister.

Mine (=my girlfriend) is elder, and his (=his girlfriend) is younger.

My father and **theirs (=their father)** are working in the same department at a bank.

Appendix F

The Example of the Unenhanced text

Dennis held a party to celebrate his birthday last Saturday. He invited his friends and classmates to his house. Nancy was one of the friends who were invited to the party. She was looking at the pictures on the around the house and felt curious about one person in the picture.

Nancy: Who is the guy next to you?

Is he your cousin?

Dennis: No, he is not mine (=my cousin). He is Janet's brother.

Nancy: He is a cute guy. Could you please introduce him to me?

Dennis: mmm...

Nancy: What's wrong? Does he have any girlfriends?

Dennis: Yes, he is popular among girls, and his girlfriend is Judy.

Nancy: Who's Judy? Do you know her?

Dennis: Of course, Judy is my girlfriend's twin sister.

Mine (=my girlfriend) is elder, and his (=his girlfriend) is younger.

My father and theirs (=their father) are working in the same department at a bank.

著重形式教學法對台灣大專生學習所有代名詞

成效之研究

楊致慧* 何聖欣** 黎瓊麗***

摘要

本研究調查著重形式教學法對台灣大專生學習所有代名詞之成效。參與者為 99 位就讀某技術學院日間部五專一年級護理科學生。來自於兩個班級的同學分別被指定為實驗組與控制組。在實驗組的教材中，全部的所有代名詞以粗體形式呈現以突顯其顯著性；而控制組的教材，內容雖與實驗組相同，但沒有任何以粗體形式表現的字。經過前、後測的結果比較得知：實驗組在後測的表現優於控制組 ($M = 6.31$; $M = 4.96$)；實驗組於前、後測的成績進步較多。因此，從本研究結果得知，利用著重形式教學法對台灣大專生學習所有代名詞上有正面的效果。

關鍵字：著重形式教學法、輸入語言增強、所有代名詞

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