THE EFFECTS OF FOCUS ON FORM ON CHINESE EFL LEARNERS'ORAL PERFORMANCE IN TASK-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ผลของการสอนไวยากรณ์ที่มีต่อความสามารถทางการพูดในการเรียนภาษาแบบ Task-based ของผู้เรียนชาวจีนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

นางสาวเฟย หวัง

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต
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Suranaree University of Technology has approved this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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เฟย หวัง : ผลของการสอนไวยากรณ์ที่มีต่อความสามารถทางการพูดในการเรียนภาษาแบบ Task-based ของผู้เรียนชาวจีนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ (THE EFFECTS OF FOCUS ON FORM ON CHINESE EFL LEARNERS'ORAL PERFORMANCE IN TASK-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING) อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา : ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร.ปัณณธร แสงอรุณ, 253 หน้า

เมื่อไม่นานมานี้ Focus on form ได้รับความสนใจจากนักวิจัยจำนวนมาก งานวิจัยที่ผ่านมาแสดงให้เห็นว่า Focus on form มีผลดีต่อการพัฒนาความสามารถในภาษาที่สองของผู้เรียนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ อย่างไรก็ตามยังมีงานวิจัยจำนวนน้อยที่ศึกษา การจัดกิจกรรม Focus on form สำหรับผู้เรียนที่เป็นเด็ก หรือศึกษาประสิทธิภาพของการจัดกิจกรรม focus on form ที่มีต่อความสามารถทางการพูดภาษาต่างประเทศของผู้เรียนที่เป็นเด็ก งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาอิทธิพลของการสอนที่เน้นความหมายและไวยากรณ์ (Focus on meaning and form) ที่มีต่อความรู้ทางไวยากรณ์ และความสามารถในการใช้คำกริยา "be" ผู้ร่วมงานวิจัยเป็นนักเรียนระดับประถมศึกษาชาวจีนจำนวน 60 คน การศึกษานี้ใช้วิธีการวิจัยทั้งเชิงปริมาณและคุณภาพ ในการเปรียบเทียบวิธีการสอนสองวิธี คือ การสอนที่เน้นความหมายและไวยากรณ์ และการสอนที่เน้นเฉพาะความหมาย การทดลองจัดทำในเวลาสองสัปดาห์ สัปดาห์ละสามครั้งๆ ละ หนึ่งชั่วโมงสามสิบนาที ประสิทธิภาพของวิธีการสอนทั้งสองวัดจากคะแนนทดสอบก่อนเรียน คะแนนทดสอบหลังเรียนครั้งที่หนึ่ง และคะแนนทดสอบหลังเรียนครั้งที่สอง แบบทดสอบประกอบด้วยแบบทดสอบความรู้ทางไวยากรณ์ เพื่อทดสอบความรู้ของผู้เรียนเกี่ยวกับกริยาช่วย "be" และการทดสอบพูด เพื่อทดสอบความสามารถในการใช้กริยาช่วย "be" ในการสื่อสารจริง ผู้เข้ารับการทดสอบแต่ละคนตอบแบบสอบถาม และได้รับการสัมภาษณ์ทันทีหลังจากการทำแบบทดสอบหลังเรียนครั้งที่หนึ่ง และสามสัปดาห์หลังจากนั้น ผู้เข้ารับการทดลองทำแบบทดสอบหลังเรียนครั้งที่สอง

งานวิจัยนี้มีผลการศึกษาที่สำคัญสามประการ

ประการที่หนึ่ง ผู้เข้าร่วมการทดลองในกลุ่มที่เรียนโดยการสอนที่เน้นความหมายและไวยากรณ์ มีความรู้และความสามารถในการใช้กริยาช่วย "be" มากกว่า ผู้ร่วมการทดลองในกลุ่มที่เรียนโดยการสอนที่เน้นเฉพาะความหมาย

ประการที่สอง ผู้ร่วมการทดลองที่เรียนโดยการสอนที่เน้นความหมายและไวยากรณ์ สามารถคงความรู้และความสามารถในการใช้กริยาช่วย "be" นานกว่าผู้เรียนที่เรียนโดยการสอนที่เน้นเฉพาะความหมาย

ประการที่สาม ผู้ร่วมการทดลองมีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อการสอนที่เน้นความหมายและไวยากรณ์

ผลการศึกษาของงานวิจัยนี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงประสิทธิภาพของการสอน ที่เน้นความหมายและไวยากรณ์ในบริบทการจัดการเรียนการสอนที่ถูกจัดเป็นพิเศษสำหรับงานวิจัยนี้ งานวิจัยในอนาคตควรศึกษาประสิทธิภาพของการสอนที่เน้นความหมายและไวยากรณ์ในบริบทอื่น ๆ

สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ
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ลายมือชื่อนักศึกษา Fei Wang
ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา Pornpimon Songsorn

FEI WANG : THE EFFECTS OF FOCUS ON FORM ON CHINESE EFL LEARNERS'ORAL PERFORMANCE IN TASK-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING. THESIS ADVISOR : ASST. PROF. PUNNATHON SANGARUN, Ph.D., 253 PP.

FOCUS ON MEANING AND FORM / FOCUS ON MEANING / ORAL PERFORMANCE

Of late, focus on form (FonF) has regained a number of researchers' interest. Recent studies suggest that FonF has a positive effect on the ESL learners' language proficiency. However, few have investigated how FonF is integrated into instruction and what effect it has on the young EFL learners' oral performance. This study investigated the effects of focus on meaning and form (FonMF) on grammatical knowledge and the use of the copula *be*. The participants of the study were 60 Chinese primary-school students. It employed both a quantitative and a qualitative method. It compared two treatments: FonMF and FonM. The FonMF treatment consisted of meaning-oriented plus focus-on-form activities, while the FonM treatment consisted of meaning-oriented activities. The treatments covered three one-and-a-half hour periods in each of two consecutive weekends. The effects of the two treatments were measured through a pretest, a posttest and a delayed posttest. The test consisted of a grammatical knowledge test to examine the participants' explicit knowledge about the copula *be* and an oral production test to examine the participants' ability to use the copula *be*. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted on each participant immediately after the posttest to supplement the findings of the tests. A delayed posttest was conducted three weeks later.

Three major findings were evident. First, the FonMF treatment group demonstrated a comparatively strong, positive effect. The FonM group also experienced a gain in the copula *be*; however this increase was significantly smaller than gains observed for the FonMF group. Second, the FonMF group retained these gains while the FonM group did not retain significant gains. The third finding was that the participants held positive attitudes and comments on the experience of the FonMF treatment. The findings identified the effectiveness of the design of FonMF in this study in a laboratory setting. Further research is needed to examine the effects of this design in a wider range of EFL settings.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FonF.....Focus on form

FonFs.....Focus on forms

FonMF.....Focus on meaning and form

FonM.....Focus on meaning

GKT.....Grammatical knowledge test

OPT.....Oral production test

EFL.....English as a Foreign Language

L2.....Second Language

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the research

During the last three decades, Chinese teachers of English and researchers have found a serious problem using the traditional grammar translation method (GTM) for instructional purposes. They found it fails to improve Chinese EFL students' competence in using English for real communication (Qin, 1999; Wu, 2001). In response to this problem, the Chinese government has called on a thorough reform of English language teaching (ELT) in China. The new syllabi for English in the primary and the secondary schools requires the use of communicative language teaching methodology and stress the learners' ability to use language for the purpose of communication. It states that ELT should aim to develop the students' four basic skills with particular emphasis on reading and cultivation of their basic ability to use English both in speech and writing for communication. It is the first time in the history of ELT in China that the actual use of the language for communication has been placed in such a prominent position. The ELT in the schools of China is undertaking an overall reform in curriculum and syllabus design, textbook development, teaching methodology research, teacher training and the assessment systems. It is generally acknowledged that the reform is going in a positive direction. However the reform is not going to be an

easy journey, because there are difficulties, contradictions and even conflicts in both teachers' concepts and the practice of the ELT.

The most difficult job in the reform lies in the practice of the communicative language teaching (CLT) in China. Since the CLT was introduced into China in the 1990s, it has been meeting considerable resistance, based on practical reasons that favor the use of GTM in China. First of all, the English teaching in China is test-driven, which focuses on examining whether the students master specific vocabulary items and grammar structures. The students' English proficiency is measured by the pen-and-paper test. Furthermore, the English test scores is one of the scores that are recorded as the students' achievement as well as the teachers', which means both the students and the teachers have to strive for high test scores. Therefore, the communicative language teaching is hard to fit into this situation. Secondly, English is a foreign language in China, which means it is used very little outside the classroom. With limited chances to use English, it seems that the ELT appears to be an intensive instruction of grammar rules so that it can meet the demands of the test. Thirdly, the large class size (usually 50 or 60 students in a class) makes the communicative language teaching methods very difficult to carry out effectively. Despite these unfavorable circumstances, the Chinese educational administration and English teachers are still optimistic about the reform of English language teaching. At the same time, more and more English researchers and teachers are probing the approaches that can integrate the grammar translation method into the communicative language teaching.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Form-focused instruction" by Ellis (2001), has played a crucial role in English language teaching in the EFL classrooms. There has been a growing agreement on the importance of the form-focused instruction in English language teaching in the EFL situation. Without abundant exposure to English and without an environment for communicating the language, form-focused instruction not only promotes more rapid L2 acquisition, but also assists EFL learners in gaining higher proficiency (Long, 1988; Ellis, 2002). As Long (2001) points out, during the past 30 years more and more researchers have found that there is a need for a communicative use of the foreign language in the classroom and the need for a linguistic focus on foreign language learning. It has become the concern of "how best to achieve such a focus, not whether or not to have one" (p.181).

Over the last ten years, a growing number of research studies have addressed the issues of form-focused instruction. These studies have been conducted to identify the conditions in which form-focused instruction facilitates or promotes L2 learning and acquisition. The findings suggest strong evidence that form-focused instruction is significant to L2 learning or acquisition. To acquire a second language, form-focused instruction is necessary and unavoidable (Fotos, 1998; Ellis, 2002; Hinkel and Fotos, 2002; Richards, 2002). But it does not mean we should revert to the entire traditional grammar teaching methods. The integration of form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching has attracted the growing interest of researchers.

Currently, L2 research indicates that a combination of form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching can achieve better effects for L2 acquisition, but there are few research studies to show how to combine them, or what is the best way to combine them (Long, 2001). Long (1991) coins a term 'focus on form' (FonF) to represent the concept of integration of form-focused instruction into communicative language teaching. However, so far FonF has evolved from Long's original definition which mainly refers to the incidental FonF (see the details in Section 2.1) into planned FonF (see the details in Section 2.2) in which many tasks and techniques (e.g. input flood, input enhancement) are designed to present the preselected target grammatical structures.

A brief glance through the literature concerned with FonF (see the definition on page 10) research studies since the 1990s shows three trends on this issue. The first trend is mainly investigating whether explicit instruction or implicit instruction shows more effectiveness on the learning of a single linguistic item. The research studies of second trend are input-based, which investigates the effects of different operationalization of input on L2 learners' learning of the linguistic form. The research studies of the third trend are output-based, which examines the effects of output on the learning of the linguistic item.

For the first trend, some studies (e.g. Reber, 1993; N. Ellis, 1993; Dekeyser, 1998; de Graaff, 1997; etc) are concerned with the effects of L2 learners learning a grammatical form by being taught explicitly or implicitly. Explicit and implicit

teaching refers to whether explicit rule explanation is used or not. The measurement usually uses a grammar test, or error correction or judgment of well-formed sentences. The results show that explicit learning outperformed implicit learning. One of the reasons for the heavy use of explicit teaching/learning is that it is easy to measure the outcome of learners' explicit knowledge (Ellis, 1998, 2001). Although, these studies suggest that explicit instruction is successful in helping L2 learners gain grammatical knowledge, they fail to offer insights that can help L2 learners develop their ability in using grammatical knowledge in a real communication.

The second trend, part of recent research studies, focus on the effects of input enhancement (e.g. Shook, 1994; Joudenais et al., 1995; Williams, 1999; Alanen, 1995; Robinson, 1997; White, 1998; Leow, 2001, etc). The rationale of these studies is the 'noticing hypotheses' that learners acquire language that they noticed (Schimidt, 1990, 1994, 1995). It has been found that input enhancement is effective in drawing learners' attention on the linguistic form (White, 1998), but it is not effective in helping learners process input into intake.

The third trend, part of the research studies (e.g. VanPatten & Sanz, 1995; VaPatten, 1996; VaPatten & Oikennon, 1996; Muranoi, 2000; Izumi, 2002; Radwan, 2005) compared the effects of input-processing instruction and production-based practice on comprehension and production, finding that the input-processing instruction gains better effects in comprehension and both conditions gain equal effects in production. Some studies adopted the input-processing instruction and

output-based practice (e.g. Izumi & et al, 1999; Izumi, 2002) to investigate whether input or output is better to encourage L2 learners to notice the form. The rationale of input processing instruction is that output-based group leads learners more effectively to notice the form than input-based group. However, the input-processing mode has been considered as FonFs by some researchers (Doughty and Williams, 1998a; Doughty and Williams, 1998b), because input-processing involves explicit rule explanation, which is against the notions of FonF.

In the three trends mentioned above, there are four gaps in the previous research:

(1) Studies of the first trend are more likely the FonFs, because these studies involve the explicit rule explanation.

(2) Studies of the second trend pose the weak point of input enhancement that is not efficient to help L2 learners acquire the target grammatical structure, though it does induce L2 learners to notice the target grammatical structure, which is necessary for L2 acquisition to occur. But these studies did not provide insights on how to help L2 learners process the input to intake.

(3) Studies of the third trend are also more likely the FonFs, because these FonF techniques involve the explicit rule explanation. Likewise, mere input-processing or output-based practice is not enough to bring about successful learning of the target grammatical structure. Further, these studies also did not shed light on how to help L2 learners process the input to intake.

(4) The measures used in these studies are somewhat constrained, usually as

grammaticality judgments or fill-in-the blank tests that are used to test learners' explicit knowledge about the grammatical structure rather than measurements to test learner' implicit knowledge about the grammatical structure. To date, there is no clear evidence that FonF results in the ability to apply the targeted structure in communication (Ellis, 2003). In addition, the result in favor of explicit teaching is regarded as being biased because few studies investigated the long-term effects of explicit teaching.

1.3 Rationale of the study

The rationale for the study was two-fold. One originates from the gaps in previous studies. The other rationale is to test the efficacy of the theoretical framework that is necessary for successful integration of focus on form with CLT. In light of the combination of empirical and theoretical aspects, the present research study addressed these inadequacies in the following ways:

First, the present study did not adopt the explicit rule explanation, since the notion of it extends out of the framework of FonF adopted in the present study. Casting a focus on form does not mean a movement back to the explicit rule explanation. In addition, explicit rule explanation is not suitable for the Grade Five level of primary school students, for the young learners at this age still found it difficult to understand and reluctant to accept the abstract of grammatical rules.

Second, a comparably explicit FonF technique (input enhancement) was adopted in

the present study, based on the positive effects of input enhancement in drawing learners' attention to the target form reported in most previous studies. Hence, the effects of input enhancement would be examined in drawing up young learners' attention to the target grammatical structures.

Third, given the inadequacy of input enhancement in failing to help L2 learners process the input, a phase is needed for learners to understand the input after their attention is drawn to the target structures. Based on the SLA model by Gass (1997), making L2 learners perceive the target grammatical structures is only the first stage of acquisition. The second stage is to make L2 learners comprehend the target grammatical structures both semantically and syntactically, so that input can become intake. Hence, in the present study, another FonF technique (consciousness-raising activities) (C-R) was adopted to assist L2 learners in understanding of semantic meaning of content and syntactic meaning of the target grammatical structure. Provided that there are few empirical studies investigating the effects of C-R activities, it is worthy of investigating whether this kind of FonF technique takes effect as some researchers (i.e. Rutherford, 1987; Tanaka, 1998; Ellis, 2003) argued that C-R activities promote understanding of target grammatical structures.

Fourth, it is indicated that output is necessary for L2 learners to acquire the target grammatical structures successfully. According to the SLA model advocated by Gass (1997), output is the last stage of the acquisition process, which may trigger L2 learners' apperception of the gap between what they produced and the target structure.

Therefore, providing chances for L2 learners to produce target structures was employed in the FonF activities to ensure the effectiveness of FonF.

Fifth, with respect to the measurement of the participants' L2 learning, the present study adopted not only the grammatical knowledge test to test their explicit knowledge about the target structure, but also the oral production test to test their ability to use the target grammatical structure. This was done because most of previous studies only used a measurement to test the learners' explicit knowledge about the grammatical target structure, while few studies examine the learners' ability to use the target structure. Furthermore, the study involved a delayed posttest to examine the retention effects of FonF on L2 acquisition, for some previous studies (e.g. DeKeyser, 1995; Robinson, 1996, 1997) have only used an immediate posttest in which they found the short-term advantage for students receiving form-focused instruction.

1.4 Research Questions

The present study addressed two research questions:

(1) What are the effects of the two treatments (FonMF and FonM) on Chinese EFL learners' gains of the grammatical knowledge about the copular *be* (is, am, are) and their ability to use the copula *be* in the oral performance?

(2) What are Chinese EFL learners' perceptions towards the effectiveness of the two types of treatment on the grammatical knowledge gains about the copular *be* (is, am, are) and their ability to use the copula *be* in the oral performance"?

Research Question 1 contributes to the identification of issues such as whether the target grammatical structures (copula *be* – noun; *be* + adjective) are worthy of form-focused; whether the types of FonF (input enhancement, C-R activities) used in the present study were feasible and beneficial to Chinese learners' acquisition of the copular *be* structure.

Research Question 2 helps to provide more information to confirm the results obtained in Research Question 1, and it clarifies the role of the participants' perceptions about the treatments based on the information elicited from what the participants were thinking.

1.5 Definition of terms

Focus on Form (FonF)

FonF in the present study refers to the instructional approaches that draw L2 learners' attention to linguistic form and encourage them search functions of the linguistic form.

Focus on meaning and form (FonMF)

FonMF in the present study refers to a meaning-based instructional approach in which the learners' attention is drawn to the linguistic form and how the linguistic form functioned through two types of explicit focus-on-form techniques (i.e. textual enhancement, C-R activities).

Focus on meaning (FonM)

FonM in the present study refers to an implicit treatment in which the learners' attention is focused on meaning. There is not any effort to draw their attention to the linguistic form.

Target form

The target grammatical structures used in the present study are copular *be* (am, is, are) + noun and *be* + adjective.

Textural enhancement (TE)

TE in the present study refers to the typographically highlight (bolding and coloring) the target form (am, is, are) in the reading passage, aimed at drawing learners' attention to it.

Consciousness-raising activities (C-R activities)

Consciousness-raising activities in the present study refer to the six steps (activities) designed to induce learners find the features of the target structures (i.e., the agreement of subject and the copula *be*; *be* + noun and *be* + adjective).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter contains three main parts. First, it starts with the review of definitions and conceptions on focus on form (FonF) and focus on forms (FonFs). Second, it presents the theories underpinning FonF and the theoretical framework for conducting FonF. Third, it provides a critical literature review on research studies related to FonF.

2.1 Definitions and Conceptions of FonF and FonFs

2.1.1 FonF

The term FonF was first put forward by Long (1991) and evolved into many terms that are related to form-focused instruction. It originally referred to overtly drawing 'students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication' (Long, 1991, p.45-6). The definition was later advanced by Long and Robinson (1998) that FonF "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" (Long& Robinson, 1998, p.23). This definition suggests that shift of attention from meaning to form should be brief and arise out of the communication. Poole (2005, p.2)

explains FonF as "an intermittent, temporary, and explicit oral concentration by teachers and students on problematic grammatical-as well as lexical-items during communicative interaction".

Doughty (2001, p.211) defines FonF based on Long's definition as "FonF entails a focus on formal elements of language and focus on meaning simultaneously. The key cognitive construct in FonF is focus and selective attention. It involves learners' briefly and perhaps simultaneously attending to form, meaning and use during the language processing".

Ellis et al. (2002) note that the primary focus of attention is on meaning. The attention to form arises out of meaning-centered activity in a communicative task. For example, students might be asked to perform an information-gap task while their attention is drawn to one or more linguistic forms which are needed to perform the activity.

Williams (2005) reviewed the literature on form-focused instruction and analyzes it into two parts: the focus and the form. The focus points to cognitive engagement and learning processes in which the learner's attention is briefly turned toward some features of language during an act of communication, for instance, when they are reading, conversing, listening, and so forth. These features might be pronunciation, inflectional morphology, word form, word definition, and the like. However, the critical point of such brief turning focus is on the processing of meaning as part of an act of communication, and furthermore, the diversion to form is in service of communication of meaning.

The present study adopts the definition of Ellis et al. (2002) about FonF since the present study aims at investigating the type of planned FonF. The types of FonF are discussed in the following section.

2.1.1.1 Types of form-focused instruction

According to Ellis (2001; Ellis et al., 2002, p.420), form-focused instruction can be categorized as follows:

Table 2.1 Types of form-focused instruction (Ellis, et al., 2002)

Type	Syllabus	Primary focus	Distribution
1. Focus-on-forms	Structural	Form	Intensive
2. Planned focus-on-form	Task-based	Meaning	Intensive
3. Incidental focus-on-form	Task-based	Meaning	Extensive

Table 2.1 presents three types of form-focused instruction. Type 2 (planned focus-on-form) is investigated in the present study, which means that the researcher preselects linguistic forms and specific techniques for learners, hoping them be about to use the preselcted form while performing some meaning-centered task. Due to the aim of investigating meaning and form, the planned focus-on-form is termed focus on meaning and form (FonMF) in the present study.

2.1.1.2 Focus on meaning and form (FonMF)

Focus on MF in the present study refers to a meaning-based instructional approach in which the learners' attention is drawn to the linguistic form

and how the linguistic form functioned through two types of explicit focus-on-form techniques.

There are mainly three types of techniques used in previous studies for promoting planned focus-on-form: input-based, production-based and process-oriented FonF. Techniques for input-based FonF are enriched input, input flood and input enhancement (see more details in Section 2.5.2). Techniques for output-based FonF are usually manifested as focused communicative tasks (see more details in Section 2.5.3). Techniques for process-oriented FonF are usually C-R tasks (see more details in Section 2.5.4).

2.1.2 Focus on meaning (FonM)

Focus on meaning is an approach that runs against the traditional grammar teaching approach (e.g. focus on forms). This approach usually refers that L2 learners learn L2 incidentally (i.e., without intention to linguistic form) or implicitly (i.e., without awareness of linguistic form) from exposure to the target L2 language samples. This approach is strongly supported by some researchers (e.g. Krashen, 1985; Wilkins, 1976) who claim that L2 learning works in the same manner as L1 acquisition, because the best way that people learn a language is from communication instead of treating the language as an object of study. Thus, these researchers believe that the adult L2 learners, like L1 young children, are capable of subconsciously analyzing linguistic form and inducing grammar rules, given that sufficient elements for 'positive evidence' (e.g. comprehensive input, authentic and simplified input, negotiation of meaning) for the L2 acquisition are provided.

According to Doughty and Williams (1999), FonM excludes attention to the formal elements of the language. Thus, the FonM approach is concerned with getting L2 learners to concentrate solely on understanding the meaning of the language conveyed.

2.2 Advantages and disadvantages of FonF and FonM

2.2.1 Advantages and disadvantages of FonF

FonF is supposed to capture the strengths of an analytic approach (e.g. traditional grammar translation method) and a communicative approach (e.g. immersion program) while dealing with their limitations (Long, 1998, p.22). In other words, FonF entails a focus on formal elements of language while primarily focus is in meaning.

FonF can be proactive in that instructors can plan in advance to ensure which form will be focused on. This kind of FonF can be embedded in communicative activities. For example, Ellis (2003) proposes focused grammar tasks (e.g. structured-based production tasks, input enhancement, input processing, consciousness-raising tasks) for FonF occurring in the task learning.

FonF also enables pedagogical interventions to be embedded in communicative activities. For example, instructors can provide implicit or explicit negative evidence (e.g. recast) to occasionally draw learners' attention to the target form during the communicative interaction. It can push learners beyond communicatively effective language toward target-like second language ability. It can speed up the natural acquisition processes.

On the other hand, some researchers (e.g. Lightbown, 1998; Long & Robinson, 1998) propose some constraints of FonF. First, what form should be focused on and determining the degree of focus is not an easy task in regard to proactive FonF, since instructors have to balance meaning and form in the design of tasks. Second, it is not practical in most classrooms to conduct a reactive FonF due to the wide range of learner abilities.

2.2.2 Advantages and disadvantages of FonM

There is a claim that "people of all ages learn language best, inside or outside a classroom, not by treating the languages as an object of study, but by experiencing them as a medium of communication" (Long, 1998, p.18). This claim suggests that focus on meaning instruction is valuable in many ways. First, focus on meaning promotes L2 learners' communicative abilities. With emphasis on communication, learners learn languages spoken or written that are authentic and meaningful, in return, that L2 learners can produce languages that are authentic and meaningful which is the ultimate goal of L2 learning. Second, with the provision of sufficient quantities of L2 exposure, L2 acquisition is more likely to be possible.

On the other hand, purely focus on meaning poses more problems to the L2 learners in the EFL context. First, an increasing amount of evidence suggests that L2 learners fail to learn the L2 simply from exposure to the meaning. Second, more and more studies (e.g. the French immersion programs in Canada) show that L2 learners cannot achieve L2 as accurate as native speakers by mere exposure. Third, it may be comparatively time-consuming for L2 learners who are merely exposed to the

meaningful language without any help to master the language form. Fourth, some problematic features of the L2 are hard to be learned without the additional saliency, due to the L1 influence, for example, the English copula *be* between the subject and the adjective is not observed by Chinese L2 learners. For example, "I happy" (I am happy). Since the interlanguage can convey the meaning of the sentence, it always leaves learners unaware of the existence of error.

2.3 Principles underlying FonF

2.3.1 Implicit and explicit learning

It is important to understand the difference between implicit and explicit learning and the role they play in second language learning. However, it is very hard to define them and has always been disputable. Hayes and Broadbent define implicit learning as "the unselective and passive aggregation of information about the co-occurrence of environmental events and features" (1988, p.251). N. Ellis (1994, p.1) defines implicit learning as "acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations". The two definitions suggest one crucial characteristic of implicit learning is that it lacks consciousness of the structure being learned. Furthermore, in the psychological domain, consciousness is often compared with awareness. Similarly, it is hard to define consciousness and awareness. According to DeKeyser (2003), awareness is the defining feature used in the second language on implicit and explicit learning. Therefore, implicit learning is defined as "learning

without awareness of what is being learned" (p.314). In this view, explicit learning is learning with awareness. Hulstijn (2005, p.135) defines explicit learning as "an intentional effort to uncover the rules of the system underlying the input data". It is also termed as learning explicit knowledge.

There is a general agreement that L1 acquisition is the process of implicit learning, but there is less agreement on L2 acquisition that it is the process of implicit learning as L1 acquisition. Some theorists (e.g. Krashen, 1981) argue that L2 acquisition is similar to L1 acquisition. But some theorists (e.g. Carlson, 1997; Dekeyser, 1998) acclaim that there is very little evidence of L2 learning without awareness (based on the previous empirical studies). The researcher of the present study believes in the latter view that explicit learning is necessary for L2 learners.

2.3.2 Implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge

Implicit knowledge refers to, according to Ellis (2003, p.105), "knowledge of language that a speaker manifests in performance but has no awareness of. For example, native speakers of English know that the sentence 'The teacher explained Koji the rule' is ungrammatical and the sentence 'The teacher showed Koji the rule' is grammatical'. But they are unable to explain how they make the correct judgments".

Explicit knowledge refers to "knowledge about language that speakers are aware of and, if asked, can verbalize. For example, I know that there are some verbs, like 'explain', which are Latinate in origin and which do not permit dative alternation while there are other verbs, like 'show', that are Anglo-Saxon in origin and do" (Ellis, 2003, p. 105).

Ellis (2005) lists some characteristics of implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge:

1. Characteristics of implicit knowledge:
- *Intuitive awareness of linguistic norms*
- *Procedural knowledge of rules and fragments*
- *Variable but systematic knowledge*
- *Access to knowledge by means of automatic processing*
- *Access to knowledge during fluent performance*
- *Nonverbalizable*
- *Potentially only within critical period*

2. Characteristics of explicit knowledge:
- *Conscious awareness of linguistic norms*
- *Declarative knowledge of grammatical rules and fragments*
- *Anomalous and inconsistent knowledge*
- *Access to knowledge by means of controlled processing*
- *Access to knowledge during planning difficulty*
- *Verbalizable*
- *Any ages*

(Ellis, 2005, p. 151)

There is no dispute in distinction of two types of knowledge, but wide controversial in the relationship between them. There are three basic positions toward it. First, the non-interface position (e.g. Krashen, 1981) holds that explicit knowledge cannot convert into implicit knowledge. Second, the strong interface position (e.g. Dekeyser, 1998) holds that explicit knowledge can convert into implicit knowledge. Third, the weak interface position (e.g. Ellis, 1994, 2003) holds that explicit knowledge can facilitate the development of implicit knowledge but will not automatically change into it.

Among three positions concering the relationship between implicit and explicit knowledge, I take the third position where explicit knowledge is assumed to facilitate

the development of implicit knowledge. There is another theory (Skill-building theory) which lends support to this position.

2.3.3 Skill-building theory

Skill-building theory explains that the initial stage of learning is conscious. L2 learners learn a second language by first consciously learning its rules (Ellis, 2003). The conscious of the L2 knowledge is termed as declarative knowledge by Anderson (1993). Declarative knowledge is factual, descriptive and 'knowing what' (e.g. add –s after the verb when the subject is the third singular form in the simple present tense). While procedural knowledge is automatization of declarative knowledge (usually as 'knowing how', e.g. learners can use the third singular –s correctly without having to think about it). Procedural knowledge can be developed from the declarative knowledge being taught.

The development of declarative linguistic knowledge into proceduralized knowledge needs communicative practice (Johnson, 1996; DeyKeyser, 1998; Anderson, 1993, 2000; Ellis, 2003). It is necessary to point out that the practice here is not equal to the traditional view that it involves mechanical drills. It is meaning-focused practice.

Ellis (2003) proposes that, to make the prodeduralization happen, the task can be served as the communicative practice, because it provides opportunities for learners to practice forms that have been first presented declaratively and to process the forms during the communication.

2.3.3.1 The interface between implicit/explicit learning theory and skill-building theory

Based on the acclamation of the aforementioned two theories, there exists a key difference between them regarding to the particular role that explicit knowledge plays in L2 learning (Ellis, 2003). Ellis states:

> *Skill-building theories see learning as primarily a process by which explicit knowledge is converted into implicit knowledge via communicative practice. In contrast theories of implicit learning view the processes by which learners acquire implicit and explicit knowledge as inherently different and separate. Where implicit learning is unconscious and automatic, explicit learning involves a conscious search for structure and is highly selective. The different perspectives of skill-learning theories and theories of implicit learning are often referred to in terms of the interface position and the non-interface position.*
>
> (Ellis, 2003, p.148-49)

Some theorists (e.g. Krashen, 1981; Hulstijn, 2002) hold the non-interface position and propose that explicit knowledge plays no role in the conversion of implicit knowledge. Some theorists (e.g. Smith, 1981; DeKeyser, 1998) believe in the strong interface position and propose that explicit knowledge can be transformed into implicit knowledge through communicative practice, while Ellis (1994, 2003) proposes a weak-interface position that explicit knowledge can facilitate the development of implicit knowledge rather than changes into it.

Based on Ellis' weak-interface model, explicit knowledge plays two major roles in facilitating development of implicit learning in two major ways. First, it helps in the process of noticing. Second, it helps learners notice the gap between their

interlanguage and the target language. These two ways are illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

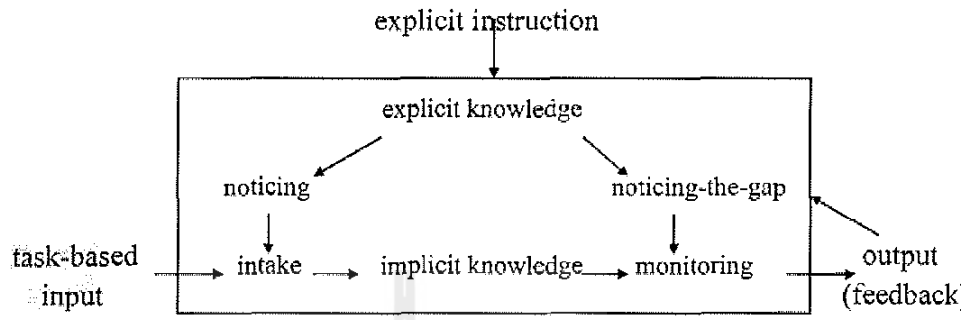


Figure 2.1 The role of explicit knowledge in implicit learning (Ellis, 2003)

This model shows the role that explicit knowledge plays in the process of implicit learning. The process contains two stages: from intake (i.e. forms are stored in short-term memory) to the acquisition of implicit knowledge (i.e. forms are taken into long-term memory). During the process, explicit knowledge facilitates learners to notice the form at the intake stage and to assist in learners' noticing the gap between their output and target language provided consciously.

2.3.4 Noticing Hypothesis

Ellis' weak-interface position is built upon Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990, 1994, 2001). Schmidt strongly argues for the role of consciousness in SLA, against Krashen's (1981) acclamation that acquisition is a subconscious process. He claims that "noticing is necessary and sufficient condition for the conversion of input to intake for learning" (1994, p.17). It is regarded as a strong form of the "noticing hypothesis". He makes a further modification to a weak form of noticing hypothesis by claiming that

people learn about the things they pay attention to and do not learn much about the things they do not pay attention to (Schmidt, 2001). It suggests that attention to form is necessary but may not be sufficient for acquisition. His hypothesis is based on an assumption of information-processing models of cognitive psychology that attention is considered as resource of consciousness. Consciousness is a limited capacity memory system. In other words, it is related to the short-term memory or working memory, which is necessary for permanent long-term memory (Doughty, 2001).

Schmidt (1990, 1994) classifies consciousness into three levels: consciousness as awareness, consciousness as intention and consciousness as knowledge. At the first level, awareness involves three degrees: perception, focal attention and understanding. Perception may be conscious or subconscious; focal attention refers to noticing in terms of subjective experience; understanding is the higher-order awareness. Generally, consciousness at the awareness level is necessary for input to become intake, which is the core principle of the Noticing Hypothesis.

At the second level, consciousness as intention consists of passive awareness and active intent. That is, people often become aware of things while they do not intend to notice.

At the third level, consciousness as knowledge involves conscious processes of selection and assembly (e.g. whether the explicit knowledge or implicit knowledge are used in performance). Two types of knowledge are: declarative knowledge ('knowing that') and procedural knowledge ('knowing how') (e.g. Anderson, 1993) or explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge (e.g. Bialystok, 1978).

2.4 Framework for conducting FonF

A useful model of SLA summarized by Gass (1997) presents a generalized view among SLA researchers on the L2 learning process. The model consists of five stages, as illustrated in the following figure:

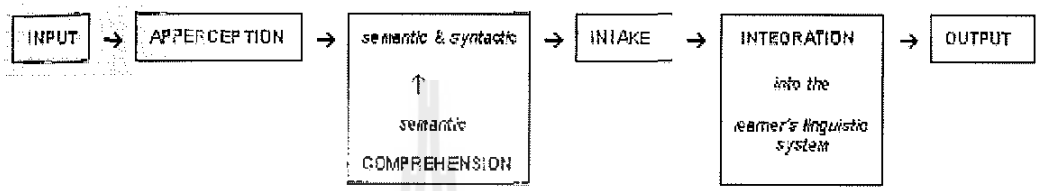


Figure 2.2 An SLA model by Gass (1997)

1. Input

As shown in the figure, the acquisition process begins with the apperception of input. Apperception is similar to Schmidt's idea of noticing. It refers to the certain part of the input that is selected by the learner from among the input exposed to them. According to the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), it is hold that input which is apperceived is potential to be acquired by learners. To achieve learners' apperception in the input stage, many approaches are proposed to draw learners' attention on particular linguistic features of the input.

2. Comprehension

The second stage, comprehended input, represents the hypothesis that a learner may comprehend the input at a semantic level rather than at a syntactic level. While semantic comprehension is not expected to lead to the acquisition of the linguistic

system because learners may comprehend the input through lexis without understanding the linguistic structures.

3. Intake

Only when a combination of semantic and syntactic processing takes place, the comprehension will pass into intake. It is just at this stage that learners analyze input at a syntactic level.

4. Integration

Integration is "the process for using or holding the intake in short term memory to influence the development of the linguistic system, which in turn affects the L2 output that the learner produces" (Chapelle, 1998, p.22). Skehan (1996, p. 47) states that "integration involves making use of the developing system to create output. It is a process as 'fluency', which concerns 'the learner's capacity to mobilize an interlanguage system to communicate meanings in real time". As a consequence, the process will be reflected in the process of output.

5. Output

Output is the observable result of the integration process as well as the manifestation of learners' linguistic system. Output is considered as an important element to the L2 acquisition, known as output hypothesis by Swain (1985), of which Swain (1985) argues that producing output pushes learners to activate semantic and syntactic system so as to achieve full grammatical competence. During this process, learners will modify their output more target-like when they produce problematic language. It is a process that engages learners to move from semantic to syntactic

processing. Schmidt (1994) notes that output may not enable learners to integrate entirely new grammatical structures into their interlanguages, but it may help them use partially acquired structures more fluently and more accurately.

Earlier FonF studies (e.g. Harley, 1989; Spada & Lightbown, 1993; White, 1989) involve grammatical production practice as a form of output. The results have shown learners' gains in grammatical structures.

Summary

This model of SLA has illustrated how an L2 learning occurs and provided a framework for pedagogical options. Within this model, FonF can be addressed with a variety of approaches.

2.5 Previous research studies on FonF

Within the framework of the SLA model, some researchers (e.g. Skehan, 1998; Richards, 2002; Pennington, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 2002; Ellis, 2002) have proposed approaches that FonF should follow. These approaches attempt to hypothesize ideal conditions for each stage of the SLA model. These approaches share some common characteristics and address some different points, since they are directed at different aims and emphasis concerned with the different purposes of the research. The following part will review the available relevant FonF approaches to the present study. These FonF studies are categorized as implicit and explicit FonF, input-based FonF, output-oriented FonF and process-oriented FonF.

2.5.1 Implicit and explicit learning and FonF

The majority of studies compare the effects of the two types of instructions. Explicit instruction refers to an instructional treatment with rule explanation plus examples. Implicit instruction believes that students' attention is drawn to the target form without explicit rule explanation.

Research on implicit and explicit learning in SLA is developed from the studies on psychology. To date, a small number of studies directly compare implicit and explicit learning of L2. These studies were laboratory-based. They compare the effects resulting from different learning conditions from the most explicit approach (e.g. explicit rule instruction) to the most implicit approach (e.g. rule searching conditions). These studies generally reported a positive role for explicit learning (e.g. Reber, 1993; N. Ellis, 1993; Alanen, 1995; Dekeyser, 1995; de Graaff, 1997).

Harley (1989) investigated the effects of functional-analytic teaching on L2 acquisition of French (the *imparfait* and the *passé compose*) in a Canadian immersion program. It involved a pretest, a posttest and a delayed posttest. The study lasted 12 hours over 8 weeks. The most significant effect was only found in a delayed posttest three months later.

Lightbown and Spada (1990) investigated the influence of different FonF activities on English learning by French learners. These activities were performed by four intact classes (grades 5 and 6, aged 10 to12). The study use classroom observation. FonF activities used in the four classes were mainly corrective feedback

and positive evidence. The results showed that learners in the class who received the focus on form to the greatest extent were most accurate in their using of progressive *-ing*, and at a higher developmental level in their use of the possessive determiners *his* and *her*. Individual teachers' reactions to particular types of errors (when accompanied by feedback making the errors salient to learners) were related to greater group accuracy using those features.

Hulstijn (1989) examined the effects of focus on forms and focus on meaning through the comparison of three groups: forms-oriented group, meaning-oriented group, and forms + meaning group. The form-oriented group was asked to match sentence fragments in order with the example illustrated on a computer screen. In contrast, the meaning-oriented group was asked to read the sentences appearing on the computer screen first and then judge the correctness of the sentences. The forms + meaning group was provided with grammar explanation and meanings of sentences, without any tasks to do. The author used recall of a structure to measure the subjects' acquisition of the sentence structures. Results showed that the form-oriented group and form + meaning groups performed better than the meaning-oriented group, with the latter performed the best of all. It also suggests that leaning, with respect to complex syntax, is better for learners to be instructed in both meaning and form rather than to be instructed in either forms or meaning alone.

VanPatten (1990) studied trade-off between attention to meaning and forms. He examined learners' listening in three conditions: listening for meaning, listening with

instruction attending to forms, listening with instruction attending to grammatical morphology and lexical items. He found that learners in the condition of instructions to attend to form did not perform better in recall than the learners instructed to listen only for meaning; performance was worst for learners instructed to attend simultaneously to grammatical morphology and lexical items.

Doughty (1991) investigated the effects of focus on form on the acquisition of relative clauses. In this study, twenty intermediate level subjects were divided into three groups, a meaning-oriented group, a rule-oriented group and a control group. The three groups were assigned to read a text, summarize the text in their L1, and answer comprehension questions. The three groups all read the text with input enhancement in which the target feature (relative clauses) was highlighted and capitalized in the text. The meaning-oriented group also received help by paraphrasing the target structure. The rule-oriented group received instruction about the relative clauses. After the treatment, they took comprehension and production tests. Results showed that the rule-oriented group outperformed the other two, which implied that attention to meaning accompanied with noticing of form has advantages over attention to meaning alone in the acquisition of the target structure.

White (1991) examined the performance of beginner-level subjects' acquisition of question formation. The study was conducted in five classes. Two classes received formal instruction, and the other three were not instructed. The instruction took two weeks, during which explicit rule presentation was provided on the use of the

auxiliaries *can*, *be*, and *do*, and question words *what*, *where*, and *when*, followed by corrective feedback on learner errors in the use of questions during class activities. After a two-week treatment, a posttest consisting of a written task and an oral communication task was given to measure the effects of the treatments. It was found that subjects in the instructed classes gained higher accuracy than those in the uninstructed classes. In the delayed posttest after five weeks, a long-term effect was observed for participants in the instructed classes.

Spada and Lightbown (1993) ran a similar experiment with White (1991). They used similar groups of subjects, experimental condition, and the procedure. Two classes received a two-week period of explicit instruction and corrective feedback. The subjects showed significant gains in accuracy on the oral production between in the posttest, and maintained the gains on the follow-up five weeks delayed posttest and the long-term test (five-month delayed). The results provided further evidence of the long-term effects of FonF instruction on the target structure, but the greater significant differences were found between pretest and posttest than between the delayed posttest and the long-term test.

Lyster (1994) investigated the effects of functional-analytic teaching on 106 Grade 8 French students in five classes from different schools. All five classes were observed during the treatment. The treatment materials consisted of a curriculum unit entailing the sociolinguistic variation, context, participant roles, and speech acts. The techniques used in the class were various, such as comparisons and contrasts of

various speech acts in formal and informal contexts, role play, structural exercises and writing activities. The author used an oral production, a written production and a multiple-choice test to measure the subjects' language competence. A pretest, an immediate posttest and a delayed posttest were administered. The results revealed that functional-analytic teaching increased the subjects' ability in an immediate posttest and a delayed posttest, but it was difficult to determine which aspects of the instruction contributed to learning

Reber (1993) examined the effects of implicit learning and explicit learning. In his study, the participants who learned implicitly were asked to memorize some artificial sentences, while the participants who learned explicitly were presented with rules. After the treatment, the author asked the participants to identify new phrases and sentences. The results showed that implicit learning is superior to explicit learning with respect to the complex rules. Reber (1993) claims that when the grammar rules are complex, implicit learning showed more advantage than the explicit leaning. However, when the grammar rules are simple, explicit learning in rule identification and application of rules can be more effective than implicit learning.

N. Ellis (1993) examined the short-term effects of FonF instruction on subjects learning complex rules. The participants were arranged into three groups: a random group, a grammar group and a structured group. The target forms used were rules of Welsh morphology (initial consonants). Participants in the random group were

exposed to a randomly ordered series of consonant alternations. Participants in the grammar group were taught the rules explicitly followed by the same randomized examples. Participants in the structured group received explicit explanation of rules followed by giving two examples after each rule, and then were given the same random examples as the other two groups. Then participants were given a well-formedness test in which they judged the correctness of the sentences. The results showed that the random group performed poorly on the well-formedness tests and demonstrated little explicit knowledge of the rules. The grammar group showed solid explicit knowledge of the rules, but little ability to apply them to judge the sentences. The structured group outperformed the other two groups on both tests of explicit knowledge of rules and grammatical judgments.

Alanen (1995) examined the effects of rule presentation and visual input enhancement on the acquisition of the target structure by L2 learners. The target forms were two structures from semi-artifical Finnish: (1) locative suffixes *–lla*, *–ssa*, and *–ssa*; (2) rule of consonant gradation that involved the change from double to single consonants (e.g., from *–ssa* to *–sa*). The subjects were divided into four groups, with one group being a control group. Three experimental groups were provided with three types of input respectively: visually enhanced learning targets by the use of italics, explicit rule presentation, and a combination of both. The results revealed that rule-based group learners outperformed the meaning-based learners. Rule-based groups were significantly more accurate than the meaning-based groups. Specifically,

the test results showed that combination of explicit rule presentation plus visual input enhancement > explicit rule presentation > visual input enhancement > control. The study further suggests that the noticing facilitated by the textual enhancement contributes to a greater awareness of the suffixes.

DeKeyser (1995) conducted a computerized experiment to examine the effects of inductive and deductive learning related to the rule complexity. The target form of the experiment is a linguistic system consisting of five morphological rules and a lexicon of 98 words. Sixty-one participants were divided into implicit-inductive (I-I) and explicit-deductive (E-D) group. The I-I group received no instruction on rules of morphology and simply viewed the sentence-picture pairs, whereas E-D group received additionally instruction about the rules for five minutes before the sentence-picture matching task. After the training, the author used picture-sentence matching to measure the subjects' learning gains. The results confirmed N. Ellis's claim that explicit learning is better for simple rules, but did not support the claim that implicit learning is better than explicit learning for complicated rules. Despite the findings, DeKeyser still argues that implicit learning may help learners acquire the complex rules if more exposure time is given to learners.

Robinson (1997) obtained similar results to those of DeKeyser (1995). He examined the claims by Reber (1993) that (1) implicit learning is more effective than explicit when the grammar rules are complex and (2) explicit learning of simple and complex grammar rules is effective if the underlying rules are made salient. One hundred and four participants were randomly assigned into four groups under four

conditions: implicit, incidental, rule-search, and instructed. The participants in all conditions received 40 sentences entailing grammatical rules, in which 20 sentences were generated by simple rules, and 20 sentences were generated by complex rules. In the implicit condition, participants were required to memorize sentences. Participants in the incidental condition were asked to read for meaning. Participants in rule-search condition were asked to search for rules. Participants in the instructed condition were taught the rules. After the training, all the participants were asked to do a grammaticality judgment task on the computer. They identified the correctness of each sentence. Results did not support the Reber's first claims but did support the second, that is, the participants in the implicit group did not outperform other participants in learning complex rules, but the participants in the instructed group outperformed all other groups in learning simple rules.

Erlam (2003) compared the effects of deductive and inductive instruction on the acquisition of direct object pronouns of French by English learners. The study was conducted in a secondary school in New Zealand. Sixty-nine participants were divided into three groups: a deductive instruction group, an inductive instruction group and a control group. The deductive group received the rule explanation and was presented with examples. The inductive group and the control group did not receive any rule explanation. The study contained a pretest, a posttest and a delayed posttest, involving oral production, written production, listening comprehension and reading comprehension tests. The results revealed a significant advantage for the deductive instruction group. The study highlighted the difficulty of designing language measures to assess implicit language knowledge.

Radwan (2005) explored the facilitative effects of various types of attention-drawing instructional conditions (explicit and implicit) on the acquisition of English dative alternation. Forty-two university participants with low-intermediate English level were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: a textual enhancement condition (TEG), a rule-oriented condition (ROG), a content-oriented condition (COG), and a control group (CG). The tests consisted of a grammaticality judgment test, an identification test (identifying 44 sentences from 60 sentences) and a picture description task consisting of 26 pictures. The results showed that students who received explicit instruction outperformed those exposed to implicit instruction, and a higher level of awareness correlates positively with language development.

Summary

In sum, these studies discussed above involve a direct comparison of implicit and explicit learning conditions and the results favor the explicit condition, based on the results that learners in explicit learning condition outperformed those of implicit learning condition in learning simple grammatical rules (Ellis, 1993; Dekeyser, 1995; Robinson, 1996; de Graaff, 1997). With respect to complex rules, Reber (1993) found that implicit learning facilitates complex-rule learning better than explicit learning does. However, other studies do not find such significant differences statistically between explicit learning and implicit learning (Ellis, 1993; Dekeyser, 1995; Robinson, 1997; de Graaff, 1997). Some studies suggest that the efficacy may occur if the exposure time is increased (Robinson, 1995, 2003).

The limitations of these studies discussed above are pointed out by Dekeyser (2003): (1) These studies focused narrowly on the distinction between implicit and explicit learning. (2) The scope of the subjects and learning target were limited, i.e., studies all dealt with a specific linguistic feature. (3)They were laboratory-based rather than in classrooms. (4) The duration of the study was short-termed, of which the longest treatment time is Dekeyser's study (about 12 weeks), no study investigated longitudinally in SLA. (5) The measures used in studies were constrained, usually as grammaticality judgments or fill-in-the blank tests rather than freely constructed discourse.

Implications

Based on the findings and limitations discussed above, some implications come forth. First, some specific grammatical structures, especially those which are not salient in meaning (e.g. Welsh consonant mutation in N. Ellis, 1993; English dative alternation in Robinson, 1997), might be better learned explicitly than implicitly. In addition, explicit learning is better than implicit learning in Robinson's study (1996). Second, noticing is very important for L2 learning and acquisition, and based on the evidence of the research findings that it is important to enhance the degree of noticing. For example, rule presentation plus input enhancement is better than either rule presentation alone or input enhancement alone (Alanen, 1995) and input enhancement is better than input flood (White, 1998). Thirdly, drawing enough attention of learners to the forms and encouraging them to search for rules are more motivating and

effective than presenting rules to them. One of the reasons explained by DeKeyser (2003) is that "it enables them to notice the form at some level and at least implicitly acquire some concrete uses of these forms through subsequent exposure rather than acquire the more abstract rule during instruction" (p.332). In light of the three aspects of findings, the present study will investigate the rules that are not salient in meaning, thus the focus on form is necessary. Second, it will involve noticing in the learning condition. Third, a FonF task will be designed to motivate participants to search the rules in a meaningful context.

Furthermore, there are some discrepancies existing in previous research, which will guide the present study. First, the measurement in the previous studies is mostly grammaticality judgment which favors explicit learning, since the measurement is testing the explicit knowledge of grammar. The previous studies left a question whether FonF contributes to L2 learners' gains of implicit knowledge. Second, most studies did not involve a delayed posttest, which to some extent favored explicit learning, because explicit learning appears to be effective in L2 learners' learning a grammatical item in the short term. However, some research findings indicated that the effects of explicit learning were lost in the long term. Therefore, the present study would investigate the long term effects of FonF.

2.5.2 Input-based FonF approaches

To implement input-based FonF, the first decision to make was selecting a target structure. Harley (1993, cf. Williams & Evans, 1998) has suggested the likely candidates

for effective focus on form are those that: "(1) Differ in nonobvious ways from the learners' first language, for example, adverb placement for L2 French and English; (2) Are not salient because they are irregular or infrequent in the input, for example, conditionals in French; (3) Are not important for successful communication, for example, third person singular-s in English; (4) Are likely to be misinterpreted or misanalyzed by learners, for example, dative alternation in English" (p. 140). The choice of forms in this study was pedagogically motivated and based on the criteria above and learner-based criteria. The form copula *be* is chosen in the present study, because the form is in accordance with the criteria above and pose difficulties for Chinese learners. The form is actively used in the L2 speech and writing but is often used incorrectly. More details can be found in the separate section in which it is fully discussed.

For the second suggestion, the frequency of target forms in the language input can be operated, but it does not always make the saliency of forms work, such as articles, third-person –s, and certain tense and auxiliary forms, since these forms have low saliency or low communicative need. In this respect, some techniques, such as input enhancement, are needed in the operationalization of the input.

For the third suggestion, there are no clear criteria for how frequent a target form should be arranged in the input. The material used in the previous studies deal with the frequency in each of the sentences or every other sentence.

For the fourth suggestions, learners are supposed to use the target form to complete the task. In this sense, it involves the task essentialness. For the purpose of focus on form,

task essentialness would work, particularly when a proactive approach (e.g. preselect a linguistic form to be focused) is adopted, as pointed out by Doughty and Williams (1998a). For example, dictogloss, used by Swain (1998), requires learners to listen to the text and work together with a peer to reconstruct it exactly. This activity assumes that students negotiate the forms (communicatively) to achieve the accuracy.

It has been argued by many researchers that simplified input and increased frequency of target structures facilitate comprehension. It indirectly has an effect on acquisition by providing learners' developing linguistic systems with more grammatical information (e.g., Krashen, 1985; Long, 1983, 1983b). The early research studies investigating the relationship between the frequency of input and the accuracy of output have reported mixed findings. Positive correlations between input frequency and accuracy are found in some studies (e.g. Shook, 1994; White, 1998), whereas Wong (2000, 2003) did not find any direct relationship. So far, results have not been conclusive on the effects of simplification and frequency of input. Ellis (1997) discussed the findings and notes that it is possible that frequency may be more important at some stages of acquisition than others, for example at elementary levels. Therefore, the present study will be designed using simplified input and increasing the frequency of input to aid acquisition, in order to increase the subjects' English proficiency at an elementary level.

2.5.2.1 Input flood/enriched input

According to Williams (2005), input flood/enriched input refers to increasing the frequency of a preselected form in order to direct the learner's attention

to it. It is regarded as a highly implicit technique. Such a technique immerses learners in purposeful input and promotes the processing of these features witnout providing any sort of explicit guidance.

Empirical research studies (e.g. White, 1998; Shook, 1999; Leow et al., 2003) indicate that input flooding alone may not be particularly effective. It is suggested that increasingly explicit devices may be needed to attract learner attention. In this study, textual enhancement, as a more explicit FonF technique, is introduced.

2.5.2.2 Textual enhancement

Textual enhancement usually takes the form of highlighting, color-coding, and font manipulation of the target structures. It aims to attract learners' attention to the target structures. It is more explicit than the input flood technique.

A number of previous studies on the effects of textual enhancement as summarized in Simard (2009) (e.g. Shook, 1994; Joudenais et al., 1995; Williams, 1999; Alanen, 1995; Robinson, 1997; White, 1998 and Leow, 2001) yielded mixed results. Of eleven studies reviewed, six of these eleven studies (Shook, 1994; Alanen, 1995; Joudenais et al., 1995; White, 1998; Izumi, 2003 and Lee, 2007) yielded positive findings for the facilitative effect of enhancement, whereas five studies (Leow, 1997, 2001; Overstreet, 1998; Leow, 2001, 2003 and Wong, 2000, 2003) found no positive effect at all.

The mixed results may be from three aspects of the treatment. First, these studies consisted of varying length of treatment and exposure to the input. Most of the studies

contained short-term treatment and limited exposure (e.g. Alanen for 30 minutes; White for 10 hours in a two-week session). Second, some studies did not use a consistent single method of textual enhancement. Some of the studies combined other methods, for example, Shook (1994) and Alanen (1995) used explicit rule explanation accompany with textual enhancement. Second, the studies adopted different measures to assess the different degrees of language gains: noticing of the form, intake of the target form (e.g. gains of the explicit grammatical knowledge) or comprehension. The studies producing negative results, such as, White (1998) used a correction test and a multiple-choice test to measure learners' gains in the target form and a reading comprehension test to test learners' comprehension. The findings reveal that learners have noticed the form but did not gain the usage of the form. Leow (2001) used on-line think aloud protocols and written production tasks to test learners' noticing and intake of the target form. The results indicated that TE had no effect on learners' noticing, intake and comprehension.

Although the previous studies vary in the effects of TE on the learners' gains in the target form and comprehension, most of studies nevertheless confirmed that TE has potential to draw learners' attention to the target form. The point is that this technique is still relatively implicit, for "they simply make forms perceptually salient without offering any explicit expectation as to what kind of processing should ensue" (Doughty & Willaims, 1998, p.236). Hence, only increasing perceptual salience is not effective enough to assure the success of acquisition. Based on the process of SLA, drawing learners' attention to the target form is just the initial step of the acquisition process. It must involve other techniques to help learners process the input.

White (1998) carried out a classroom-based research study that investigated the effectiveness of FonF instruction involving different types of input enhancement in a communicative context. The participants are primary and secondary school children in Quebec. The target form was the third person singular possessive determiners (PDs). The study was carried out over a five-month period. There were three treatment conditions. G1 (G E+) received a typographically enhanced input flood in addition to extensive reading and listening; G2 (GE) received a typographically enhanced input flood; G3 (GU) received a typographically unenhanced input flood. After the treatment, a pretest, an immediate posttest and a delayed posttest were conducted at three different times in the study to measure learners' developing knowledge and ability to use third person singular pronouns and PDs. They included a passage correction task, a multiple-choice test, and an individually administered oral picture description task. Results show that G E+ gained the greatest increase in grammatical forms. G E+ was considerably more accurate than G E and GU. The findings showed that although drawing the learners' attention to a linguistic feature is beneficial, learners sometimes were uncertain about the purpose of the typographical enhancement. It further suggests that there may need somewhat more explicit information to help learners progress to more advanced developmental stages.

Williams (1999) investigated the relationship between memory for input and inductive learning. Fifty-eighty participants who were university students, averagely 23 years of age, participated in three experiments (N1=26, N2=16, N3=16). All the

experiments contained two tasks: a memory task and a translation task. The target form has morphological rules in a semi-artificial form of Italian. The memory task was divided into 5 blocks which constituted the measure of improvements in memory performance. After the memory task was completed, there followed a translation task in which the participants translated novel English sentences by selecting items provided. Experiment 2 and Experiment 3 involve increasingly explicit manipulations of attention to form when compared with Experiment 1. In experiment 2, three modifications were made to the procedure in order to increase the salience of the grammatical morphemes in the input sentences and to enable the participants to recognize the relevant grammatical morphemes without having to rely on memory-dependent segmentation processes. First, the grammatical morphemes were highlighted in the visual text. Second, the participants were given recall cues. Third, subjects were pretrained on the vocabulary used in the training sentences. In experiment 3, modifications were made in the aspect of learners' output. When subjects made incorrect responses on recall trials, they were provided with the correct answer and were required to change their response accordingly. The results showed that there were strong relationships between individual differences in memory for input. The introduction of highlighting and vocabulary pretraining had a large impact on learning, but the ineffectiveness in improving early memory suggested that knowledge of rules did not simply emerge out of memory but depended upon the appropriate allocation of attention to input.

Implications:

The above discussed studies conducted concerning the effects of input-based FonF on the learning of linguistic structures show that (a) the noticing of the target structure correlates positively with language learning, (b) only the noticing of the target structure is not enough to make the input become intake, the output is also necessary for to the learning of the target structure.

Drawn on the confirmation of the previous studies, textual enhancement will be adopted in the present study, that is, italicized and colored font will be used for the target form.

2.5.3 Output-oriented FonF approaches

The effect of the output-based practice is usually compared with the input processing. Input processing (I-P), a term coined by VanPatten (1996), is a type of focus on form that is "input-based and meaning-based" (as opposed to output-based). It is operationalized as structured input activities (SI) which consist of two parts: referential activities and affective activities. The referential activities usually require learners to interpret simple sentences and learners are given feedback as to whether or not their interpretations are correct. Through this phase, input data are manipulated in particular ways (i.e. forms and relevant examples presented to convey the meaning) so that learners "become dependent on form and structure to get meaning and or/to privilege form or structure in the input" (VanPatten, 2002, p.764-765). Following the referential activities, affective activities provide learners with questionnaires which

require them to answer by connecting with their own meaningful situations. Below is an example of I-P activities quoted from Allen (2000, p.83), in which an initial activity with French causative is presented in (1) and an affective activity is presented in (2):

The structured input activities are usually manipulated as:

> *(1) Select the correct interpretation of the sentence. Circle a or b.*
> *Tom fait fair les valises a Marc.*
> *a. Tom packs the bags.* *b. Marc packs the bags*
> *(2) Read each statement below and put a check in front of the things that your French teacher sometimes has you do.*
> *Mon professeur de francais...*

A number of research studies examined the effectiveness of input processing. VanPantten, Cadierno, and Sanz (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Sanz, 1995) have all argued that what they call processing instruction is the key to development of the learners' IL system.

2.5.3.1 Output-based practice vs. input-processing

Izumi et al. (1999) addressed the noticing function of output. The researchers posed two research questions: (1) Does output promote noticing of linguistic form? (2) Does output result in improved performance on the target form? Twenty-two ESL college-level students were assigned to an experimental group (N=11) and a control group (N=11). The target form was the English past hypothetical conditional. The design of the study was a true experiment with pretest and posttests. It involved two phases. In Phase I, EG participants were asked to read and underline a short passage with approximately 70% of its sentences containing the past hypothetical conditional. Then after the passage was collected, the participants were

asked to reconstruct it. CG participants were exposed to the same input for the same amount of time and instructed to read and underline just as the EG were, except that they were reading and underlining to answer true/false comprehension questions. In Phase II, EG participants received a writing topic which required them to use the target form for the writing task. CG participants wrote on a topic that did not require the target form. The pretest and posttests consisted of a grammaticality judgment test and a picture-cued production test. Results show that, although Phase I tasks resulted in noticing and immediate incorporation of the target form, the posttest performance failed to reveal their effects. Phase II resulted in improvement on the subsequent posttest. It suggests that the efficacy of output in promoting noticing and learning is required for acquisition.

Allen (2000) compared the effectiveness of two types of explicit grammar instruction: processing instruction and traditional instruction. She investigated 179 fourth-semester of high school students' acquisition of French causative. The students were assigned to three groups: PI group, TI group and no instruction (control group). The measurement used in the study consisted of an interpretation tasks, a distracter task, and a production task. The interpretation task involved 15 sentences and 15 corresponding pairs of pictures on overhead transparencies. As each sentence was read, the corresponding pair of pictures was revealed. The distracter task required students to answer three short questions that were unrelated to the causative, in order to decrease the influence of the interpretation task on the production task. The

production task was an open-ended activity in which students were asked to write five complete sentences in French saying what their parents have them do at home or what their teachers have them do at school. The results showed that (1) PI and TI performed better on both the interpretation and the production tasks than no instruction group. (2) No significance was found between PI and TI for the interpretation task, while TI performed significantly better than PI for the production task. (3) Concerning the durability of the effect of instruction, there was no significance between TI and PI on posttest 2 and posttest 3 for the interpretation task. For the production task, TI was significantly better than PI on posttest 3, but no significance was found between TI and PI on posttest 2. The results may suggest that PI and TI are equally effective in drawing learners' attention to the target form (French causative) in the interpretation task. This result is different from the study of VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) in which PI is better than TI. This study gives the explanation that the equal effectiveness of both types of instruction may result from both instructions (without the subsequent practice) were effective enough to help learners complete the interpretation task. For the result that favored TI over PI on the production task, the reason may lie in the insufficient input, thus output practice in TI may have been more beneficial than input practice in enabling learners to produce sentences with the target form.

Izumi (2002) investigated the potentially facilitative effects of output and visual input enhancement on the acquisition of English relativization by ESL adult learners.

The study was an experimental study with a pretest and a posttest. It involved four treatment groups and one control group. Four treatment groups are: +O-IE (the group was required to produce output and was exposed to regular, unenhanced input); +O+IE (the group was required to produce output and received enhanced input); -O+IE (the group received enhanced input without output); -O-IE (the group received unenhanced input without any output requirement). During the treatments, participants of all treatment groups were required to read and understand the text; to reconstruct the text for the output group; to answer questions for the non-output groups. The test consisted of a sentence combination test, a picture-cued sentence completion test, an interpretation test and a grammaticality judgment test. The major findings are: (1) those engaged in output-input activities outperformed those exposed to the same input for the sole purpose of comprehension in learning gains; (b) those who received enhancement failed to show the gains in learning, but only the impact on the noticing of the input; (c) the effect of input enhancement was not comparable to that of output.

Marsden (2006) compared IP and a type of input-based instruction, enriched input (EI), to examine whether learners can attend to form while attending to meaning during processing input. If so, the study will yield that PI will lead to better gains than EI. Twenty-seven 13/14-year-old learners, learning French (regular French verb inflections in the perfect and present tenses) as L2 were involved in the study. They were randomly divided into two groups: IP and EI. Pretests, posttests and delayed

posttest were carried out to assess the impact of IP and EI. The measurement consisted of interpretation tasks and production tasks. In the interpretation tasks, learners were required to listen 48 items and read 55 items. Of this 24 listening items and 17 reading items were for learners to identify the present or past forms, and the remaining 24 listening items and 38 reading items for learners to match inflected verbs of person and number with subjects. In the production tasks, learners were required to produce 56 written and 38 oral sentences provided with a clue of pictures; four written narrative short paragraphs describing what particular people normally do and what particular people did during the previous days and eight oral narrative tasks describing eight photographs of a family's activities. The study results showed that IP performed better than EI, which suggests that IP instead of EI engage learners in processing the target forms, that is the provision of grammar explanations did not result in learning gains. The results also provide evidence supporting VanPatten's (1996, 2002) claim that learners are more likely to access to the lexical meaning rather than the grammatical form when processing the semantic information.

Fernandez (2008) investigated the role of explicit information (EI) in the IP by observing learners' online response in the SI activities. She compared two groups: IP+EI group and IP-EI, aimed to find out whether the IP+EI group perform better than IP-EI so as to prove that EI is helpful for learners' acquisition. The target forms investigated in this study are Spanish OVS sentence order and Spanish subjunctive in expressions of doubt. There were 84 college students (English as L1) with

beginning-intermediate L2 Spanish level in the study. They were divided into 42 participants in each group. Learners in IP+ EI group read the EI first, and then did 30 items of referential activities, while IP-EI group did the same number and type of activities as that of IP+EI group, but did not receive EI. The study tracked learners' trials to the correct answer, response time and the rate of correct answers. The findings indicate that EI did not help learners notice the OVS sentences but did help learners to notice subjunctive inflections. It suggests that the results may depend on two reasons: the nature of the online tasks and the nature of the processing problem. The nature of online tasks required participants to attend to the verb inflections while doing the referential activities. It is assumed that EI provided in advance enhanced learners' knowledge so they respond faster than the participants without EI provided, thus participants without EI have to spend more time to find form-meaning connection from the input. On the other hand, the nature of the processing problem is concerned with different linguistic forms. Different forms demand different processing strategies, e.g. the inflection of verbs in Spanish subjunctive is familiar to English speaking learners, since English has a similar grammatical feature. Therefore, learners do not need to build a new processing strategy. While Spanish OVS sentences are new to English speaking learners, EI might not be effective in building a new processing strategy. Learners need more exposure to input to process the form.

Toth (2006) investigated the role of output in IP by comparing processing instruction (PI) and communicative output (CO). The target form is the Spanish

anticausative *se*. The participants were 80 English speaking university students learning Spanish at a beginning level. They were divided into three groups: PI (n=27), CO (n=28) and a control group (n=25). Both treatment groups receive 5 to 10 minutes of explicit instruction of the target form, followed by 30 to 35 minutes of activities. The explicit instruction for both treatment groups is identical. The activities in PI are referential and affective structured input activities. In referential activities, instructors read each given sentence to the class while learners listened and matched them to appropriate pictures. In affective activities, instructors read many sentences containing target form to have learners judge the correctness of the sentences. In contrast, the CO Activities involved teacher-initiated questions to elicit students' answer. The questions are open-ended, not like the questions of PI that have provided answers for students to choose from. The assessment consisted of grammatical judgment (GJ) tasks and written production tasks. An immediate posttest and a 24 day delayed posttest were conducted. The results showed that the PI group did not outperformed the CO group on the GJ and production tasks, and the CO group performed better on the production tasks than PI group, and similar performance on the GJ with the PI group. Furthermore, the transcript of the CO group indicated learners reformulate their utterances. It suggests that output plays a facilitative role in acquisition as well as input.

Morgan-Short and Harriet (2006) conducted a similar experiment as Toth (2006). The study also compared PI, output-based instruction (MOI), and a control group. The participants were first-semester Spanish L2 students (n=45). The target form was Spanish

preverbal direct object pronouns. The treatment used the computer to display the activities. PI and MOI consisted of identical referential and affective activities, with the differences in feedback. The PI group was provided with choices for learners to choose and feedback whether their choices were correct, while the MOI group were only provided with the indications that their answers were incorrect and the correct answers were unavailable. The assessment involved pretests, immediate posttests, and delayed posttests that measured interpretation and production. There were 20 items in interpretation test and production test respectively. The results showed both PI group and MOI group gained significant differences on immediate and delayed tests for the interpretation tests, while for the production tests, only the MOI group outperformed the control group. These results confirmed the previous studies' claims that output has a facilitative role in acquisition.

2.5.3.2 Dictogloss task

In this task, learners are required to listen to a short text read to them at normal speed, and then take notes about the original text individually. Then they worked in small groups to reconstruct the text from their shared resources. The final versions are then analyzed and compared (Swain, 1998). Different versions are then compared and analyzed in a whole class setting.

The process of learners' comparison of different versions of texts is considered as the process of noticing-the gap, since it overtly directs learners' attention to differences between their interlanguage and the target language. This process embodies cognitive comparison, triggering learners to become consciously aware of

their current language competence while they are reconstructing the text. Doughty & Williams (1998) states that this process is collaborative metatalking, which engages learners in syntactic rather than semantic processing, "which may be necessary for IL restructuring to occur" (p. 239).

Kowal & Swain (1994) find that learners appear to engage in the kind of syntactic processing through the collaborative interaction during the dictogloss. Such a syntactic processing is claimed to be necessary when learners access to the accuracy of L2.

Doughty and Williams (1998) and Williams (2005) raised doubts as to whether the dictogloss could be qualified as FonF, as this kind of technique stands at the outer edge of the FonF continuum.

Implications

The studies reviewed above show that output is necessary to promote learners acquisition of the grammatical knowledge through comparison of the effects of output-based practice and input-processing. Therefore, to provide the participants with chances to output will be adopted in the present study.

2.5.4 Process-oriented FonF approach

Most of the studies reviewed above demonstrate the effectiveness of input-oriented and output-oriented approach. The studies also indicate that both input and output oriented activities are necessary to aid acquisition of an L2 and favoring one at the expense of the other does not benefit learners. However, so far few studies

have investigated how to get L2 learners to process input into intake, which is the process-oriented approach for FonF instruction. In relation to this point, consciousness-raising (C-R) appears to serve this purpose. Many researchers (e.g. Rutherford, 1987; Ellis, 2003) have discussed and claim that consciousness-raising is beneficial for the L2 learners' processing input to intake. However, few research studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of C-R in helping L2 learners process the input to intake.

2.5.4.1 Consciousness-raising (C-R) tasks

The term 'consciousness-raising' used in the present study is based on Rutherford (1987). He defines C-R as "the drawing of the learner's attention to features of the target language" (p.189). Yip (1994) summarized Rutherford's view of C-R:

> *It focuses on aspects of grammar without necessarily using explicit rules or technical jargon. Instead of trying to impart rules and principles directly as in the traditional grammar lesson, it seeks to help learners discover for themselves by focusing on aspects of the target structures. On the other hand, it differs from pure communicative approaches by telling learners which structures are ungrammatical and providing the grammatical counterparts.*
>
> (Yip, 1994, p.124)

This view is shared by Ellis (2003), who states that C-R tasks are the kind of activities that do not require learners to produce the target structures immediately. It is a learner-centered process where the learners rely on their intellectual capacities and use their cognitive modes to learn. The most important assumption of C-R tasks is to make L2 learners keep noticing and lead them to an awareness of the language structure.

Furthermore, it does not necessarily use explicit rule presentation to help learners discover the rules by themselves, since it teaches learners how to learn instead of teaching grammatical concepts. The point is distinguishable from other FonF approaches (e.g. input processing). Ellis also argues that C-R is useful at an initial stage of acquisition to trigger the declarative knowledge, paving the way gradually to the procedural knowledge when learners attend to content rather than form.

Butler-Tanaka (1998) summarizes eight principal points that CR covers:

> *1. It is an inductive approach which does not usually present learners with rules.*
> *2. It observes the principles of Universal Grammar.*
> *3. It rejects PPP in favor of activities that promote understanding of grammar.*
> *4. It is learner-directed.*
> *5. It teaches learners how to learn.*
> *6. It is process and not product oriented.*
> *7. It presents learners with data and invites them to make conclusions based on the data.*
> *8. It is a means to an end and not an end in itself.*
>
> (Butler-Tanaka, 1998, p. 13)

2.5.4.2 C-R activities proposed by Willis (1996)

Willis (1996) provides several typess of C-R activities that aim at increasing awareness and sensitivity to language forms. They are exemplified as follows:

> ***Identify/consolidate***
> *Students are asked to search a set of data to identify a particular pattern or usage and the language forms associated with it.*
> ***Classify (semantic; structural)***
> *Students are required to work with a set of data and sort it according to similarities and differences based on formal or semantic criteria.*

> ***Hypothesis building/checking***
> *Students are given (or asked to make) a generalization about language and asked to check this against more language data.*
> ***Cross-language exploration***
> *Students are encouraged to find similarities and differences between patternings in their own language in English.*
> ***Reconstruction/deconstruction***
> *Students are required to manipulate language in ways which reveal underlying patterns.*
> ***Recall***
> *Students are required to recall and reconstruct elements of a text. The purpose of the recall is to highlight significant features of the text.*
> ***Reference training***
> *Students need to learn to use reference works-dictionaries, grammars and study guides.*
>
> (Willis, 1996, p.7)

These activities support the model of SLA acquisition process (Gass, 1997). Firstly, the process of identification and consolidation are ways of helping students build up semantic concepts. After students are familiar with the meanings of the text, they are given chances to study the forms through the process of semantic classification to a structural classification. Students are helped to notice target structures at the semantic level and structural level. In the next activity, it reinforces the analysis of the target structures through the discourse structure. Willis (1998) states that "analysis activities give learners time to systematize and build on the grammar they know already, to make and test hypotheses about the grammar and to increase their repertoire of useful lexical items" (p.103). The reconstruction activity engages learners to formulate their own language, which may generate the comparison of the target language and learners' interlangauge. This is regarded as an essential process to acquisition. Generally, the

activities aim at raising learners' consciousness to the language forms while engaging learners in a meaningful context (see fully discussion of these activities related to the present study in Section 2.5 and Section 3.1.6).

2.5.4.3 Rationale for C-R tasks

Schmidt (1990, 1994) notes that L2 acquisition is a conscious process and he distinguishes different senses of consciousness concerning L2 acquisition: consciousness as attention and consciousness as awareness. Consciousness as attention refers to learners noticing the form at an initial stage. Consciousness as awareness is a continuous stage termed as noticing the gap. He proposes that intake is what is noticed.

Schmidt documented his acquisition of Portuguese during a five-month stay in Brazil (Schmidt & Frota, 1986). He kept a diary of what he had noticed through instruction and also recorded his interactions with native speakers. By comparing the two sources of data, Schmidt found a significant association between what he noticed in the linguistic forms in the classroom and his later use of these forms in real world. He suggests that what aided his learning forms was the raised consciousness. In contrast, Altman (1990) analyzed in a similar fashion her acquisition of Hebrew over a five-year period. Altman found that half her notes of Hebrew could be associated with diary entries of noticing, while the other half of data was hard to identify as such. Perhaps this became intake subconsciously. These two anecdotal studies are testimony to the hypothesis that learners learn what they noticed.

A number of empirical studies have taken the issue into account when examining the facilitative roles of "noticing" on the L2 acquisition.

2.5.4.4 Previous studies on C-R tasks

A small number of studies have investigated the effectiveness of C-R tasks. Fotos' (1994) investigated the effects of C-R tasks in comparison to the traditional grammatical rule instruction on 160 Japanese university EFL learners. The study used a grammaticality judgment test and a sentence production test to measure the subjects' proficiency gains in the target structures (adverb placement and indirect object placement). The results showed that the participants in the C-R tasks conditions produced the same significant proficiency gains in the knowledge of target grammar structure as the traditional grammar rule instruction condition. Furthermore, the subjects in the C-R tasks condition maintained the significant gains after a two-week period. Harley (1998) examined the effectiveness of a series of C-R tasks on the L2 young learners' (seven or eight years of old) learning of French gender. The results showed that the C-R tasks effectively impact learners' proficiency gains in the target structure. Naashia (2004) carried out a study to determine learners' attitudes towards learning grammar through the use of two types of C-R tasks. The results indicated that the learners viewed both task types as useful for the learning of grammar. Walsh (2005) developed two types of the C-R tasks and examined the effectiveness of them in Japanese high school students' writing. The results indicated that the C-R tasks were effective in drawing the learners' attention and aiding the learners in forming form-meaning

relationships which may help the learners build implicit knowledge. Finally, Pica et al. (2006) developed C-R tasks to examine the roles of the C-R tasks in attention-drawing and the learners' interaction. The results revealed the effectiveness of the C-R tasks in promoting the learners' attention to the target form and the learners' interaction.

Fotos (1994) focused on two questions. First, whether C-R task performance on the gains of the target grammatical structures is as effective as the traditional way. Second, whether the C-R task performance produces L2 negotiation of meanings. To the first question, the findings of the study gave a positive answer. That is, C-R tasks as well as the traditional grammar teaching method promote learners to gain knowledge in the target grammar structures measured by the posttests and delayed posttests. To the second question, the findings also confirm the hypothesis that learners produced amount of L2 negotiation during C-R tasks, and there is no significant difference between C-R task group and the communicative task group.

Fotos (2002) presents two types of C-R tasks which she called as interactive, structure-based tasks implemented in a task-based approach.

1. Structure-based tasks with an implicit focus on grammar

(1) using planned language and a task solution
(2) drawing activity targeting locative, prepositions
(3) instruction
(4) rewriting the incorrect sentences from their pre/posttest (grammaticality judgment tests based on the task material)
(5) doing production exercises
(6) reading stories containing multiple uses of the target forms

(Fotos, 2002, p. 144)

2. Structure-based tasks with an explicit focus on grammar

Learners' attentions are called to the target structure, rather than to produce the grammar structure to complete the task. Once consciousness has been raised, task performance is followed by a formal lesson on the structure, production exercises, and communicative activities containing the target structure so that continued awareness is facilitated.

Example of a grammar task on the use of *If* + conditional forms

(1) pretest the target structure

(2) working in pairs to compare two types of if-conditionals: if + will and if + would by means of asking questions and answering between partners. (e.g. one learner asks one question involved possible events in the future "What will you do if you have homework today?" or one question involved events that were not likely to happen "What would you do if you saw a spaceship?" The other learner will answer the questions based on the choice of the right form and his own thoughts. Each learner of the pair will ask and answer three questions for each form. (In this way, learners are supposed to have the opportunity for meaning-focused use the target language and to generate grammar rules for correcing word order and verb tense use.)

(3) figuring out two rules for making correct sentences for likely and unlikely events.

(4) posttest

(5) teacher-fronted lesson on the use of If + conditional, with production exercises and the correction of incorrect sentences from the two grammaticality judgment tests.

(6) reading containing many communicative uses of the structure.

(Fotos, 2002, p.146)

The possible reasons why the C-R tasks lead to affirmative findings of the hypothesis of the study may lie in these aspects. Generally speaking, C-R tasks reveal the process of model of SLA. First, C-R tasks entail the assumption FonF posits, that is, to draw learners' attention to the form in a meaningful context. C-R tasks satisfy

the element of noticing which is regarded as initial and essential part of SLA by the majority of researchers. Second, C-R tasks help students build up meaning and form connections, which are termed as semantic and syntactic process of the SLA model. Thirdly, C-R tasks provide opportunities for learners to use language communicatively.

Celce-Murcia's (2002) research in line with Larsen-Freeman's (2002) discussion of the pragmatic functions of grammar. She provides her personal teaching experience on how she teaches grammar structures (the past perfect tense) through discourse rather than through abstract, context-free sentences.

1. *use the authentic written texts containing the target form (past perfect tense)*
2. *use the text initially for reading comprehension*
3. *allow students to ask questions about any words or structures that are unclear*
4. *require students orally summarize the stories in their own words*
5. *ask students to work in groups to answer questions like these about the text:*

(1) *where does the past perfect tense occur in these texts?*
(2) *What other tenses occur?*
(3) *What is the function in the texts of the sentences with the past perfect tense?*
(4) *What kind of verb tasks the past perfect in such a text?*

6. *discuss altogether the explanations suggested by each group and decide which explanations are the best. Then use the best explanations as the grammar explanations for the target form.*
7. *ask students to think of some past event they are familiar with that involve the same important climax, result, or turning point that one might want to mention and emphasize at the end of a narrative about the event. Then ask them to write their own short narratives (in groups or individually) in the simple past—using the past perfect for the somewhat dramatic climax.*

(Celce-Murcia's, 2002, p. 131)

Murcia tried this strategy with a class of fairly advanced ESL students. She reports that many students would write good narratives after following the strategy. She concluded that some grammar structures can be explained as a rule, but some can not be. She suggests that "to fully understand any form or construction, we must also understand how it functions at the discourse level" (p.132). However, this study was not a formal experimental study, rather a study similar to action research. She describes it as a personal experience. In addition, the design of the strategy is loose and general. It may be suitable when used as a supplementary task, but may not be plausible to be used in an experimental study.

Mohamed (2004) reported a study that was carried out to determine learners' attitudes to learning grammar through the use of two types of consciousness-raising tasks. A deductive task provided explicit explanations of a grammar structure, while an inductive task required learners to discover the grammar rules for themselves. The study investigated learners' preferences relating to deductive and inductive tasks, and aimed to provide a learner perspective of the effectiveness of such tasks. The results indicated that learners viewed both task types as useful, and there was no obvious preference for one task type over the other. The study confirmed the claim of Fotos' that CR tasks do promote acquisition.

Harley (1998) used a series of activities to examine the effectiveness of FonF on French L2 children learning the gender of French nouns. These activities aimed to draw young learners' attention to the target forms, and aided them to process the use of th

form. These CR activities were based on children's games (e.g. "I Spy"," "Simon Says," "Bingo," "Concentration," and "My Aunt's Suitcase") that involve the young learners' performance on identification, contrasting and other cognitive processes.

The results of the study confirmed the claim that CR activities help learners notice more often the gender of nouns than the group of learners who did not receive the FonF technique. Learners in the CR group distinguished more accurately between masculine and feminine articles in producing these familiar nouns. However, they stopped short of generalizing from the input they received to the production of unfamiliar nouns containing the same reliable formal clues to their gender. The study confirmed the positive effect of input enhancement, along with opportunities for output and that associated feedback was needed to direct students' attention to grammatical gender. One of the reasons might be that "input on the target form was simply not available in sufficient quantity and intensity for the majority of students to establish the predictive relevance of the noun endings in question.

Walsh (2005) observed the effectiveness of CR tasks in promoting learners' acquisition of prepositions 'by', 'in', and 'on'. The subjects are Japanese high school students. CR activity is proceeding as follows:

> *(1) reading the authentic written text and examples of how target forms are used.*
> *(2) listening to the instructor verbally summarize the page.*
> *(3) comparing the original text to a multiple-choice quiz so as to complete the quiz activity.*
> *(4) reading explanation of answers on class web page.*
>
> (Walsh, 2005, p. 10)

The study found that the students were intensely engaged in the quiz. The explanations following the quiz most likely served as a post-task providing the students with a focus on the use of target forms. Students used target forms increasingly. It supports the view that the CR tasks promote acquisition, but it emphasizes that it may not produce this effect immediately, and it possesses accumulative benefits. In addition, it was a descriptive study, thus whether students acquire the grammatical forms though the CR tasks needs more strong supportive evidence.

Pica et al., (2006) designed information gap tasks to examine the multiple roles of CR tasks in drawing learners' attention to L2 forms and in contribution to learners' interaction. The cognitive processes are operationalized in five steps: (1) simple noticing of form; (2) noticing the difference; (3) noticing the gap; (4) noticing form, function, and meaning relationships, characteristic of awareness; (5) reconstruction. The participants did several tasks in five steps as follows:

> Step 1: reading a passage in which target forms are typographically enhanced by font color changes, bold fonts. (simple noticing of form)
>
> Step 2: reading a slightly different version of the original passage. The two versions differ in that each sentence is either identical to the original passage or has a phrase in which a form with low salience from the original passage appears in a different order or with a slightly different encoding. (noticing the difference)
>
> Step 3: comparing their passage versions aloud as they choose between the targeted phrases or between the sentences that contain the phrases and then justify their choices. For the spot-the-different task, they choose between nearly identical sentences. In the jigsaw task, they first reorder the sentences to match the passage and then choose between them. In the

> grammar communication task, they choose among four nearly identical phrases, one of which has been excerpted from the original passage sentences. Before they can make their choice, they pool the two phrase options each has been given. (noticing the gap and noticing form, function, and meaning relationships, characteristic of awareness).
>
> Step 4: working together to write their chosen forms for the low salience items in a signal cloze version of the original passage, without looking back at their choices or the passages they have read. (reconstruction)
>
> Step 5: rereading the original passage, compare it with their cloze version, identify any discrepancies, and posit explanations for them.
>
> (Pica et al., 2006, p. 310-11)

In these five step tasks, learners are supposed to activate their attentional processes for acquisition. Especially, in Steps 3-5 learners' participation is well suited to provide spoken and written data in which these processes can be identified. Step 3 entails that noticing forms with low salience they encode function, meaning; noticing differences between forms as they encode function, meaning; become aware of form, function, meaning relationships. Step 4 reflects that noticing the gap between forms chosen and forms in original passage with respect to accuracy, appropriateness. Step 5 represents that noticing the gap between needed and unneeded forms. These reflections are consistent with the views on noticing described previously.

The findings of this study revealed that these three types of tasks used in the study can offer a classroom-based methodology for the study of attention and interaction in SLA. The figures of learners' noticing that 85% of the pairs' total noticing occurred during Step 3 for the jigsaw task, 96% for the spot-the-difference

task, and 92% for the grammar communication tasks. These multiple applications of noticing suggested that noticing ranged from simple perception to more identification of differences and accurate use of target forms. Furthermore, with respect to the second aspect that as to the study investigated that how tasks promote international processes, the findings showed that participants modified their interactions through negotiation signals and responses of modified output with a higher frequency (76 %) during the choose step and 42% during cloze step. It indicated that information gap tasks used in the study promoted learners' message exchange and negotiations of meaning. To the third research question concerning attentional and interactional relationships, it is found that there was a strong relationship between them. Therefore, the author concluded that information-gap tasks could be good candidates for FonF techniques. However, the study was also a descriptive study which provides a new insight in the effectiveness of CR tasks, but did not examine the actual use of the claims. It did not prove whether students could gain the knowledge of target forms and use them communicatively. This lack of evidence also motivate the present study.

Implications:

So far, more evidence is required to confirm whether L2 learners process input in C-R activities. Therefore, it motivates the present study to examine the hypothesis that C-R tasks will aid the learner's noticing and processing of targeted features in the input. As Fotos said, "using tasks for grammar practice is not new" (1998, p. 306), but few studies have been conducted to investigate the cognitive process of FonF during the CR tasks. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and procedural details such as the designing of two treatments, accompanied with the theoretical framework underpinning. The process of participant selection, research procedures, the instruments, data collection procedure, data coding and data analysis methods are described in detail. At last, a pilot study was presented.

3.1 Research design

This study was designed to examine the effects of two treatments (FonMF and FonM) on the Chinese EFL primary-age participants' gains of the grammatical knowledge about the copula *be* and their ability to use the copula be in real communication, and to offer pedagogical insights into integrating FonF with task-based language learning. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods into the design.

In the quantitative method, two experimental groups were developed to provide this contrast, FonMF and FonM. The FonMF treatment emphasized meaning and form in the input and the process of input to intake in a meaningful context, whereas the FonM treatment emphasized meaning, without any focus being cast on the form.

After the treatment, an immediate posttest and a delayed posttest were conducted to collect the data. The pretest, the posttest and the delayed posttest all involved a grammatical knowledge test and an oral production test to measure the participants' explicit knowledge of the copula *be* and the ability to use the copula *be* in the oral performance. The data were also analyzed for the differences in effects between the two treatments.

Quantitative methods alone cannot explain the whole picture of the learning process, which is both complex and difficult to measure. Hence, there is a need for a qualitative method to ensure credibility of the quantitative data as well as to obtain detailed contextualized descriptions about the topic. Therefore, the present study included two qualitative approaches: a questionnaire and an interview, in order to closely examine the participants' learning process on the copula *be* and gain a deep understanding of the aspects of the treatments. More detailed descriptions of the methods will be presented separately in the following sections.

3.1.1 Site

The research site was a classroom at the participants' primary school in Southwest China. It was an usual classroom setting, identical to the ones that the participants sit in at school for school courses. Hence, it was convenient for the participants to participate in the research study. Fortunately, the teacher of the study agreed to help call on his pupils to participate in the study. Prior contact in the earlier study established significant rapport between the researcher and the participants.

The experiments were carried out over a five-weekend period from May to June, 2010. Among the five weekends, the first three weekends were for the treatment, the fourth weekend was for the posttest, the questionnaire and the interview, and the seventh weekend was for the delayed posttest. Each participant came to the classroom for one hour and thirty minutes for the treatment on the first three weekends. Each participant took fifteen minutes for the posttest, followed by a questionnaire and an interview for twenty minutes. They took the delayed posttests on the fifth week. The detailed grouping of the participants and sequence of participation are presented in Table 3.1.

3.1.2 Participants

Sixty participants of the study were selected from 257 primary school pupils in a school in Southwest China, according to the following three criteria:

First, the participants were around 10 or 11 years old and they were in Grade Five. They have learned English as a foreign language in schools for at least 2 years being from Grade 3. Based on the English curriculum, Chinese EFL pupils of this age in China have learned about 1000 English words during their past three years of learning English. Furthermore, they began to learn the copula *be* intensively in Grade Six in reference to their curriculum. Therefore, it is appropriate to select participants at such an age level.

Second, the participants had not been to an English-speaking country and they had little opportunity to use English for communicative purposes outside the classroom.

Third, the participants took three tests which were designed specifically for this study to examine the participants' grammatical knowledge of the copula *be* and their ability to use the copula *be* in a real communication. The tests consisted of a vocabulary test (see full details in Section 3.3.5.1), a grammatical knowledge test (see full details in Section 3.3.5.2) and an oral production test (see full details in Section 3.3.5.3). The vocabulary test was to make sure that the participants had no problem at reading the passage in the research study. The grammatical knowledge test and the oral production test were to ensure that the participants had little prior knowledge about the copula *be* (am, is, are).

Sixty out of the 257 participants who satisfied all levels of the three tests were invited to participate in the study. First, the participants that scored higher than 80 out of 100 in the vocabulary test. Second, the participants scored lower than 12 out of 20 in the grammatical knowledge test. Third, the participants who could not produce more than 5 sentences containing the copula *be*.

Once sixty participants in the study were recruited, they were randomly assigned into two groups reflecting the two treatment conditions: the FonMF group, and the FonM group. Thirty participants were randomly assigned to each group, each of which was exposed to the copula *be* through the FonMF or the FonM treatment.

Thirty participants of each group were randomly divided into five small groups, with six participants in each small group receiving the treatment. The treatment was administered each weekend over the study period. The FonMF group was arranged

every Saturday and the FonM group every Sunday. During this time, each participant received one and a half hours of treatment each week. Altogether, they received altogether 3 treatments for three weekends.

The five groups were first randomly arranged to receive the treatment one after another (see the grouping and time schedule in Table 3.1). Each participant was told their time to receive the treatment. Each small group received the treatment for one and a half hours.

Table 3.1 The grouping and time schedule for the treatment

Treatment group	Small group	Time (Saturday/Sunday)
FonMF/FonM	No.1-6	8:30 -10:00
	No. 7-12	10:00-11:30
	No. 13-18	13:00- 14:30
	No. 19-24	14:30 – 16:00
	No. 25-30	16:00 – 17:30

The six participants of each small group were seated in two columns of three. The distance between each participant was not so close that they could not interact and interfere with each other, because the study did not investigate participants' interaction. Therefore, the participants received the treatment and did the task individually. The desks and the chairs were moveable and when they took the oral production test, they moved a little bit far away from each other so as not to interrupt each other. Each of them was provided with a digital recorder to record their oral performance.

3.1.3 Experiment procedures

The whole experiment commenced from May 1st to June 20th, 2010, covering a period of 7 weeks, including one pre-test, three treatment sessions, one post-test and one delayed posttest administered to the participants. The working schedule of the whole experiment was schematized as seen below:

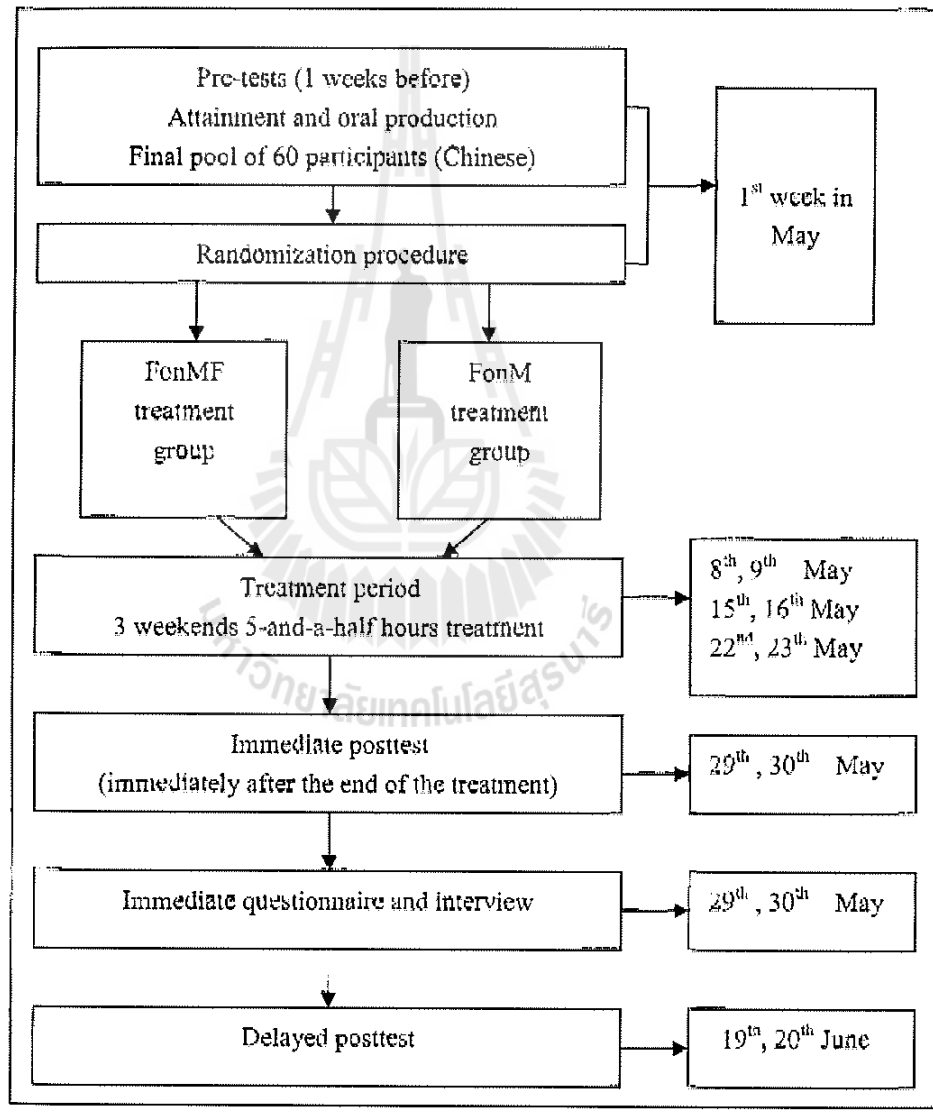


Figure 3.1 Overview of the time schedule of the experiment

3.1.4 The target form (copula *be*)

The English copula *be* has been observed to pose difficulties for Chinese ESL beginners whose use of *be* seems to be erratic and variable (Lee, 2004; Chan, 2004). There are a few studies that have been conducted with a specific focus on the interlanguage *be* of L2 learners (e.g. Lee, 2004; Chan, 2004), but so far there have been no studies investigating the copula be from the aspect of task-based language learning. Due to differences in the system of the Chinese copula and the English *be*, there have been difficulties in introducing English *be* to Chinese ESL beginners. Even university students with years of learning experience in English still sometimes make mistakes with *be* and produce variations of *be* forms with inappropriate inflections.

English copula *be* and Chinese *shi* (similar to English copula *be*) are used differently in their respective *be* systems. *Be* is the most common verb in English and used in a variety of ways. *Collins Cobuild Dictionary* (1987) lists 28 uses of the verb *be*. In general, the English *be* has two main forms: a copula form and an auxiliary form. In terms of function and according to Halliday (1994), the process of being as a copula is a relational process being set up between the subject and its complement. A complement could be an adjective phrase, a noun phrase, or a prepositional phrase. This type of relational process has two distinct modes--attributive and identifying, that is a complement being an attribute of its subject, or the identity of its subject (Halliday, 1994). For example,

(1) The book is old. (attribute)
(2) He is a student. (identity)

As an auxiliary, *be* is used to form the passive voice, tenses and aspects, such as the continuous aspect, perfect aspect, and a planned event in front of an infinitive as shown in (3)

(3) She is doing homework.
The work has been finished..
The chairman is to come.

As illustrated by Lee (2004), the corresponding form of *be* in Chinese is *shi*. The Chinese *shi* differs from English *be* in two important ways. First, *shi* can only be used as copula and a focus marker in an emphatic sentence, but not involved at all with the voice or the tense-aspect system. Second, as a copula, *shi* can only link a noun phrase as an attribute to indicate someone's profession (4), or as an identity (5). Shi is usually not used between a subject and an adjective (6) except for being an emphatic marker (7).

(4) wo shi si ji.
I am driver.
I am a driver.

(5) ta shi wo de peng you.
He is my friend.

(6) ta piao liang.
She is beautiful.

(7) ta shi piao liang.
She is really beautiful.

Since there exist a very different *be* system between Chinese and English from a contrastive viewpoint, there is a need to guide the participants' special attention to this form.

3.1.4.1 Studies on English *be* in L1 and L2 acquisition

A number of studies on the acquisition of the sequence of English grammatical morphemes (e.g. –ing, -s, -be, -ed, etc) indicate that ESL learners of various first language backgrounds appear to exhibit a common acquisition sequence of morphemes (Berk, 2000; Bialystok, 1997; Chalmers, 1996; Flege, 2001; Hawkins, 2001; Frassica, 2009). In terms of *be*, learners tend to acquire the copula *be* earlier than the auxiliary *be*, to the extent that the sequence order would not be affected by varying conditions of learning. L2 learners in a classroom learning environment show a similarity in the development of morpheme sequences to L2 learners outside of classrooms in English speaking communities. Another common feature of interlanguage *be* from these studies is the omission of *be* either as a copula (8) or as an auxiliary as indicated in (9).

(8) We good friends..

(9) I doing the housework.

The acquisition sequence of the copula *be* before the auxiliary be and the omission of *be* have also been found in L1 acquisition and in simultaneous bilingual acquisition studies. Brown's (1973) well-known study of the three children who learned English as their first language shows that the children used the copula *be* earlier, more frequently and correctly than the auxiliary *be*. Ellis (1988) found in his longitudinal study of three classroom English learners that the omission of the copula *be* is constrained by linguistic context, that is, the copula *be* is omitted more frequently when its preceding subject is a noun, rather than a pronoun.

From previous studies of L1 and L2 acquisition of *be*, two general observations concerning be in L1 and L2 acquisition can be made. The copula *be* is acquired before the auxiliary *be* and *be* is often omitted in the learning process. Due to the lack of comprehensive data on interlanguage *be*, we are still unclear about the variation and usage of *be* in L2.

In this study, the focus was on the copula *be* instead of auxiliary *be*. One reason for this is that it is the foundation for Chinese L2 learners to acquire the copula *be* at the very beginning before they access to the auxiliary *be*. Based on the acquisition sequence, auxiliary be is related to the linguistic forms that is later acquired by L2 learners. Another reason is that an early start to such instruction was also indicated as a preventive measure against potential long-term exposure to misleading input from classmates and fossilization or ambiguous forms (Harley, 1998).

The target form (am, is, are) is treated intensively and respectively in separate treatment session. Triggered by the most frequent problems of Chinese learners learning English *be* and the previous relevant studies (e.g. Lee, 2004; Chan, 2004), the present study will focus on the two copula *be* structures: 'be + noun' and 'be + adjective'.

3.1.5 FonMF and FonM treatment

FonMF was a treatment in which participants first read a textual enhanced passage (TE) (for full details see Section 3.3.1), then they worked on the following activities: a reading comprehension activity (for full details see Section 3.3.2), a series

of consciousness-raising activities (C-R) (for full details see Section 3.3.3), and a reconstruction activity (for full details see Section 3.3.4). Of the three activities, the reading comprehension activity and the reconstruction activity were meaning-oriented and the C-R activity was form-oriented.

FonM was a treatment in which participants first read the same reading text as participants do in the FonMF group, but the passage had not any textual enhancement. Then, as in the FonF treatment they did the same meaning-oriented activity (the reading comprehension activity). After that, they memorized the content of the passage. At last, they did the same reconstruction activity as the FonMF group. The two treatments are illustrated schematically in Table 3.

Table 3.2 The FonMF and the FonM treatment

Treatment	FonMF	FonM
Activities	1. reading a TE passage	1. reading a plain passage (no TE)
	2. doing reading comprehension activity	2. doing reading comprehension activity
	3. doing C-R activities	3. memorizing content
	4. doing reconstruction activity	4. doing reconstruction activity
Focus	Meaning Rule-searching	Meaning

3.1.6 The development of the FonMF task design

The framework to implement FonMF treatment in this study follows Gass' SLA model (1997) presented in Chapelle's study (1998, p.22) (see Figure 2.2). The model summarizes a consensus view among SLA researchers. This framework consists of five stages:

(1) input (apperception)

(2) comprehension

(3) intake

(4) integration

(5) output (see detailed discussion in Section 2.5).

With the framework, the FonMF task design is correspondingly operationalized as follows:

Stage 1 Input and apperception. It is hypothesized that input which is apperceived has the potential to be acquired by learners (Schimidt, 1990). In response to Stage 1, the first step of the FonMF task was operationalized as:

Step 1 (perceptual noticing of form): Each participant in the FonMF treatment read a TE passage. Meanwhile the researcher played a MP3 with the recording of the passage. The purpose of playing the audio-tape of the passage was to engage participants in the reading passages, offer help in oral performance and avoid of skipping details in their learning. Each participant was provided with a MP3 to listen to the recording of the passage while they were doing the reading. They had 5 minutes to read the passage.

Stage 2 Comprehension. The hypothesis for this stage presents that a learner needs to comprehend the input at a semantic level and at a syntactic level. According to this, the second step of the FonMF task was operationalized as:

Step 2 (semantic comprehension): After the participants read the passage, they did a reading comprehension activity to check their comprehension. Participants did the activity individually. Each participant received the activity's answer key when he/she finished, allowing them to check their answers. In addition, the answer key was attached with a translation in Chinese for each sentence. They had 10 minutes to do this reading comprehension activity.

Stage 3 Intake. It is hypothesized that it is a stage at which learners analyze input at a syntactic level. Only after the combination of semantic and syntactic processing, comprehension will pass into intake. According to this, the third step of the FonMF task was operationalized as:

Step 3 (Syntactic comprehension): During this step, the participants in FonMF group did a series of consciousness-raising activities (C-R activities) to understand the function and meaning of the copula *be*. As before, each participant received an answer key to check their answer after they finished each part of the activity. They had, altogether, 30 minutes to do these activities.

Stage 4 Integration. Skehan (1996) points out that it is a process that intake is developed to create output. The process will be reflected in the process of output.

Stage 5 Output. According to the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985), producing

output pushes learners to activate semantic and syntactic system so as to achieve full grammatical competence. Based on Stage 4 and Stage 5, the fourth step is operationalized as:

Step 4 (Integration of form, function, and meaning relationships): In this step, each participant of both groups did a reconstruction activity. Afterwards, each of them got an answer key to check their answers.

3.1.7 The development of the FonM task design

The development of the FonM design is based on the claims made by Krashen (1985) that learning an L2 incidentally or implicitly from exposure to comprehensible target language samples is able to result in successful acquisition of the L2. This claim is largely built on the L1 acquisition model and successful experiences of ESL learners. Drawing from the FonM designs in the previous studies (e.g. Rosa and O'Neill, 1999; Williams, 1999), the FonM treatment is operationalized as follows:

Step 1. Reading and listening plain passage

Step 2. Semantic comprehension

Step 3. Memorizing task

Step 4. Integration of form, function, and meaning relationships and output

The procedure of the FonM treatment was mostly the same as the FonMF treatment except that they did a plain passage instead of TE passage and there was no focus-on-form procedure involved. The participants in FonM group did not do the C-R activities. They were provided with a translation of the passage and tried to memorize the content of the passage. They also had 30 minutes to do this activity.

3.2 Two Pilot studies for research tools

Two pilot studies were conducted a month before the main study, with the primary aim to examine and evaluate the usability and feasibility of the research tools (i.e. pre-tests, FonMF and FonM treatments, questionnaires, interviews), so as to identify the weakness in the designs and suggest further revisions to be made so that the purposes of the research study would be achieved. Thus, the tryout criteria of each research tool came from three sets of data: the expert review, the implementation and the interview.

The pilot studies involved two tryouts. The tryouts consisted of three rounds of evaluation to each research tool: (1) expert review, (2) the implementation, (3) interviews. First, each of the research tools were tried: pretests, treatments on 'am', treatments on 'is', treatments on 'are', and posttests, questionnaires and interviews. Based on the evaluation from three aspects, revisions were made to the each research tool. Then a second round of revisions were made to identify anymore weaknesses.

3.2.1 Choosing participants for the first tryout

Four participants were selected for the first tryout. They were not recruited for the main study again. The advantage of choosing a small number of participants is that, like a case study, the researcher can work with the participants more closely and observe more details about what the participants actually did and how they performed with the research tools (i.e., Williams, 2002; Olsafsky, 2006; Cress, 2009). The students were allowed to work at their own paces and on any part of the activities,

thus, a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon in the pilot stage could be observed.

In order to select four appropriate participants for the first tryout, students with previous average English course scores ranging from 80-85 (full score = 100) were selected, because the score range indicated that these students had a mastery of the learned vocabulary necessary for participants receiving the treatments in the present research study. The scores were provided by their English teachers. Then they took a vocabulary test (see Appendix VIII) to double check whether they could be qualified as participants. The vocabulary test took around 5 minutes. The participants who got vocabulary test scores higher than 80 were invited to participate in the tryout. The results of the vocabulary showed the four participants who received scores higher than 80.

3.2.2 First tryout of research tools

3.2.2.1 First tryout of pre-tests

3.2.2.1.1 Expert review

The grammatical knowledge pre-test was given to two English teachers in the Guiyang Jiaxiu Primary School. They thought the test was appropriate, not too difficult and not too easy for the participants, since the target structure 'to be + noun/adjective' had not been taught yet, and most of the vocabulary used in the pre-test had been taught. The English teachers commented that Item 7 and Item 8 were nearly the same (see Appendix V). Based on this comment, Item 7 and Item 8 were checked and validated and adjusted (see Appendix IV).

3.2.2.1.2 Implementation

Four participants took the grammatical knowledge test 5 minutes after the vocabulary test. The researcher kept track of the time that each participant took. After that, the test paper was scored by the researcher. The results of the test were presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 The results of grammatical knowledge pre-test

Participant No.	Test score (full score = 20)	Time (min)	No. of correct items		
			Item on 'am'	Item on 'is'	Item on 'are'
1.	5	10'	1, 7	12, 14	17
2.	5	13'	2, 4	10, 13	16
3.	7	11'	2, 5	10, 11, 13,	16, 18
4.	8	14'	1, 2, 5	9, 10, 14	16, 17

The results revealed that these students scored very low, which indicated that they lacked the grammatical knowledge on the target form, which led to their random choice. By reviewing their test papers, it was found that, from their test papers, sometimes they chose the sentence with target form, sometimes without. Sometimes they chose the subjective-verb agreement, while sometimes they did not. It could be demonstrated by the correct items they chose and confirmed by the later interview.

For instance, item 1 and item 7 test the same pattern, in which the right sentence for item 1 was 'I am Charlie Brown' and for item 7 was 'I am Linus'. It means that if the participants had the knowledge about it, they would choose the right answers for item 1 and item 7. However, aside from participant No.4, no participants answered both items correctly. This was confirmed by an interview later. The following is an excerpt from the interview.

R: "Hey, look at the item 1 and item 7. What does 'I am Charlie Brown' mean?"

P: "en, My name is Charlie Brown".

R: "Why did you choose the right answer for item 1 but not item 7?"

P: "ah? I don't know."

R: "How did you choose the right answer for item 1?

P: "en....I guess, I think..."

The incorrect items chosen by the participants revealed a trend that they nearly chose the sentence with right content word to match the picture. This suggested that the pictures were clear and their strategy was meaning-oriented. It was evidenced by the interviews. The following is an excerpt from the interview.

R: "Look at the item 2. Why did you choose 'I happy'?"

P: "Isn't the boy in the picture happy?"

Four participants began to take the oral test 5 minutes later. They were given a test sheet and asked to read the directions. After they understood the instructions, they began to do the preparation, and they were told to come to the researcher to do the oral performance when they were ready. Their preparation time and oral production time were counted. The details of the results of the oral test were demonstrated in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 The results of oral production pre-test

Participant No.	Time of preparation (min)	Time of performance (second)	Score (accuracy level)
1.	2'	24"	2
2.	2'	32"	2
3.	3'	29"	3
4.	3'	37"	3

Note: score 1 = 1 sentence containing correct copula *be* was produced.
score 2 = 2 sentences containing correct copula *be* were produced.

As shown in the table, all of the participants took a very short time for the oral performance and scored very low. Many of the sentences types they produced were subject + content words (i.e. I eleven years old), with one or two correct sentences containing copula *be* (i.e. My name is Jack). The results confirmed the results of the grammatical knowledge test that they had little knowledge about the target structure. In the later interview, they reported that they did not learn about the copula *be* specifically, but they remembered they have picked up this sentence some time before.

3.2.2.1.3 Interview

An interview was conducted immediately after each participant had finished the pre-tests. I asked details about their opinions on the pre-tests, for instance, pictures, test items and everything related.

In regard to the grammatical knowledge test, the interview questions were concerned with (1) whether the test was difficult and (2) whether the pictures were clear. As for the first aspect, all the four participants did not think it was difficult or easy. They reported that they did the test based on the words they knew and match the picture and the correspondent word, which confirmed the test results. For the second aspect, most of the participants reported they were not very clear about Picture 11 and 12.

3.2.2.1.4 Revision of the pre-tests

Based on the three sets of data, several revisions made to the pre-tests were made. (1) Item 8 was changed, because it was nearly the same as Item 7.

(2) Item11 and 12 were improved, because the pictures were not very clear to (see Appendix IV).

3.2.2.2 First tryout of the treatment on 'am'

Four participants (two boys and two girls) were randomly assigned into the FonMF and FonM group, with a boy and a girl in each group. The FonMF and the FonM group were administered separately, with the FonMF group first (from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.) and the FonM group second (from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m.). All the participants in each group completed the tasks individually. They sat at desks (separated by a distance of one meter) in a classroom so that they had to complete the task by themselves and had no chance to discuss with each other.

3.2.2.2.1 Expert review

The task sheets were given to the two teachers to review beforehand. They thought the whole task was interesting and that the participants would like it. They also thought it was practical, since the participants had no problem with the vocabulary in the reading passage and the sequential activities were provided with assistance for the participants to know how 'am' was used.

3.2.2.2.2 Implementation

The implementation of the first task was conducted the next day of the pretest. Some problems were identified during the process by observation.

First, all the four participants in the two groups were not very clear about the written instruction for the activity. In the reading comprehension activity, the participants read the English and Chinese instruction as below:

Choose a sentence from the text to match each picture.

从课文中选择一个恰当的句子来搭配每一幅图所表达的意思。

Two of the four participants (one was in FonMF group and the other was in FonM group) chose words instead of sentences to match the picture. After they finished this part of activity, the researcher told them to reread the instruction and emphasized that they need to choose a sentence instead of a word, and asked them to check their answers. The participants corrected them as required.

Second, the third step of the task in the FonMF group (the consciousness-raising activity), both participants in the FonMF group failed to distinguish the nouns and the adjectives. The primary reason for this is that it is still early for them to accept and understand the concept of the parts of speech. They have not been told about the concept of the parts of speech before. However, after receiving immediate feedback from the researcher on the explanations of nouns and adjectives, the participants began to understand the concept. The participants could distinguish some nouns and adjectives easily after reading the explanations of nouns and adjectives, such as the name, the career, the appearance and the characteristics. But it was a little hard for them to understand the phrase 'fond of' as an adjective.

The results of the four participants' completion of the activities were presented in the following table. In the activities, one blank is worth one point. Thus, the scores meant how many correct blanks the participants filled in.

Table 3.5 The results of participants' completion of the treatment activities on 'am'

Treatment group/ participants		Step 1 reading	Step 2 Reading comprehension		Step 3 Consciousness-Raising(FonF)/ Remembering(FonM)		Step 4 Reconstruction	
		Time (min)	Time (min)	Score Full=8	Time (min)	Score Full=28	Time (min)	Score Full=8
FonF	No.1	5'	8'	8	32'	13	10'	5
	No.2	4'	9'	6	35'	12	8'	6
FonM	No.3	3'	8'	6	8'	/	12'	3
	No.4	4'	9'	7	7'	/	10'	3

As presented in the table, in regard to the first step (reading), the maximum time used was 5 minutes.

For the second step (reading comprehension), the maximum time used was 9 miniutes and the maximum score was 8. The high frequency of incorrect items made in this activity was Item 1 and Item 2, which required the participants to find two sentences: "I live in America" and "I am American". It was demonstrated in the later interview that they were not clear about the differences of America and American, which led them to make mistakes. Hence, it was considered necessary to make a change in the content (the details was presented in the next section).

For the third step (the Consciousness-raising activity), two participants scored very low, which showed that they had difficulty in the process of recognizing the features of the verb be (i.e. *be* +noun; *be* + adjective), which was confirmed in the later interview.

For the fourth step (the Reconstruction activity), the two participants of FonMF treatment scored higher than those of FonM treatment. The most common mistakes

made by the four participants were the omission of the 'am' between the subject and the adjective. But the participants of FonM treatment made more mistakes than those of FonMF treatment, which indicated that the focus-on-form brought about some positive effects.

3.2.2.2.3 Interview

Concerning the first problem that participants chose words instead of sentences for some items in the Reading Comprehension activity, I asked them why they did this. They said that they did not pay attention to the details of the instructions. This indicated that these students were careless in this activity. Therefore, the instructions should be improved to make the participants more aware.

With regard to the second problem that participants failed to distinguish some of the nouns and the adjectives (i.e., American, fond of) after the researcher's explanations in the Consciousness-raising activities, I asked them 'Why didn't you think 'American' and 'fond of' is an adjective?' They translated 'American' and 'fond of' into Chinese and couldn't understand why they were adjectives, since 'American' sounds like a noun in Chinese and 'fond of' sounds like a verb. It indicated that the influence of the L1 made it hard to lead the participants to define them as adjectives.

3.2.2.2.4 Revision of the treatment on 'am'

(1) In order to fix the first weakness in the Reading Comprehension activity, I decided to add more explanation in the instructions to emphasize the sentences by bolding and underling the key wording and provide an example to show how to do the

ictivity. See an example as follows.

The original version:
Choose a sentence from the text to match each picture.
从课文中选择一个恰当的句子来搭配每一幅图所表达的意思。

The revised version:
Choose a **sentence**, **not a word**, to match each picture. The example is given.
从课文中选择一个恰当的**句子（注意：不是单词）**来搭配每一幅图所表达的意思。例句已经给出。

1.

1. He lives in America. √

America. ×

Figure 3.2 An example of revised instruction of the comprehension activity

(2) To fix the second weakness where they failed to distinguish some of the nouns and the adjectives, I decided to delete some sentences (i.e., 'I am American.' 'I am fond of playing baseball.' 'I am fond of flying a kite.'). I added two new sentences to make up the content (i.e., 'I am a baseball player.' 'I am friendly). The revision is presented as follows.

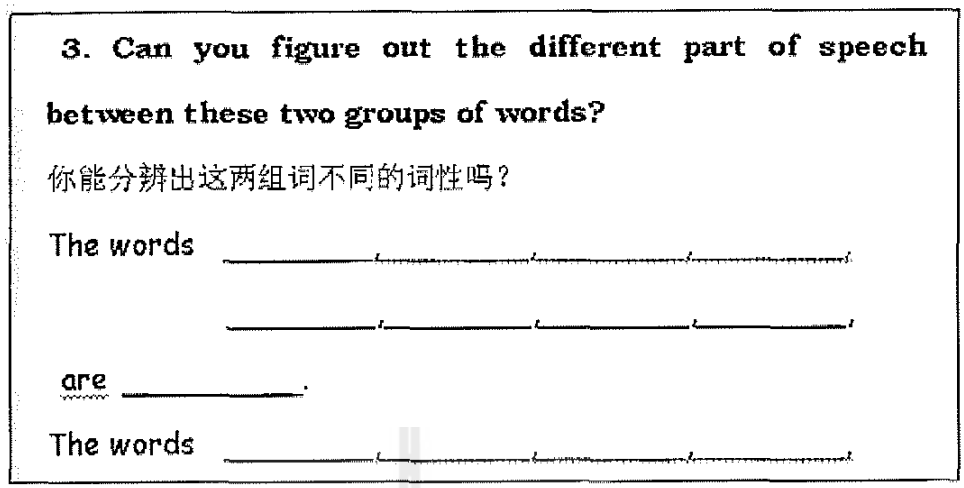
Hi! I am Charlie Brown. I live in America. I am American. I am 8 years old. I am a student. My hair is blond. I am kind. I am strong. Sometimes I am happy. But most of time, I am sad. I am fond of playing baseball. I am fond of flying a kite. I have a lot of friends, Snoopy  , Linus  , Lucy  .

Figure 3.3 The original version of the reading passage:

Hi! I **am** Charlie Brown. I live in America. I **am** 8 years old. I **am** a student. I **am** a baseball player. My hair is blond. I **am** strong. I **am** friendly. I **am** shy. Sometimes I **am** happy. But most of time, I **am** sad. I have a lot of friends, Snoopy  , Linus  , Lucy  .

Figure 3.4 The revised version of the reading passage:

In addition, the third step of the Consciousness-raising activities was changed and developed to help the participants know about nouns and adjectives. That is, to guide them to know that a noun is something they can say about a person (e.g. name, age, career, skill), while an adjective is something they need to describe a person (e.g. appearance, characteristics, feeling, facial expression). The revision is presented as follows.


3. Can you figure out the different part of speech between these two groups of words?

你能分辨出这两组词不同的词性吗？

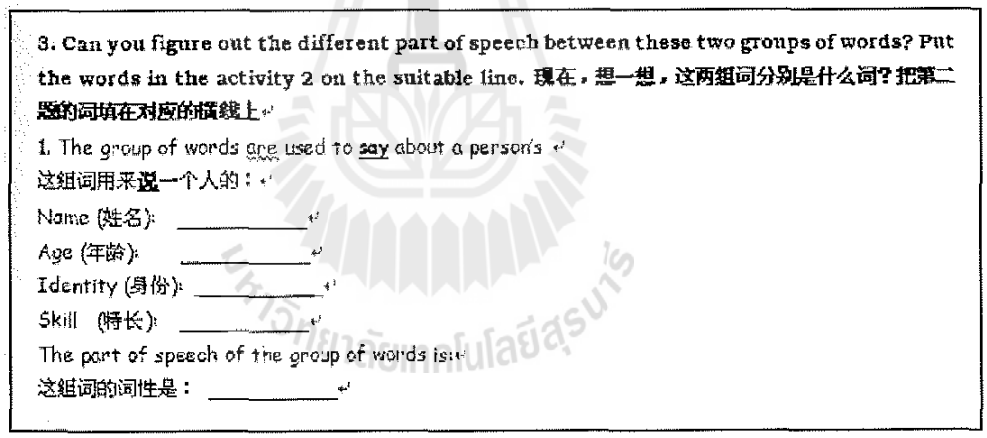
The words _____,_____,_____,_____,

_____,_____,_____,_____,

are _____.

The words _____,_____,_____,_____,

Figure 3.5 The original version of the third step in the Consciousness-raising activities:


3. Can you figure out the different part of speech between these two groups of words? Put the words in the activity 2 on the suitable line. 现在，想一想，这两组词分别是什么词？把第二题的词填在对应的横线上

1. The group of words are used to say about a person's

这组词用来说一个人的：

Name (姓名): _____

Age (年龄): _____

Identity (身份): _____

Skill (特长): _____

The part of speech of the group of words is:

这组词的词性是：_____

Figure 3.6 The revised version of the third step in the Consciousness-raising activities:

3.2.2.3 First tryout of the treatment on 'is'

Before the treatment session on 'is' was conducted, two revisions made in the first task design were correspondently made to the second task design. First, the original reading passage of second session on 'is' was changed a little bit to keep

consistency with the first reading passage based on the adjustment of the reading passage on 'am'. Second, the third step in the Consciousness-activity in the second task session was also changed to match the first session.

3.2.2.3.1 Implementation

The implementation of the second task session was conducted two days after the first task session. The four participants who joined in the first session continued to participate in the second session. At this phase, the problems occurred in the first task session would not occur again. For one thing, they were familiar with the process through the practicing of the first task session; another was that the revision had been done to the second task based on the insights from the first tryout. However, by observation of the process, some additional minor problems occurred.

First, in regard to the C-R activities, some more specific directions needed to be added. First, as concerns the first activity to ask the participants to write down every underlined word that follows 'is', the participants wrote the repetitive words, since these words repetitively occurred in the reading passage. By observation, it was discovered that it was unnecessary for them to write the same word repeatedly, and the task was able to draw their attention to each word instead of writing down mechanically the underlining words without thinking about them. Thus, I added a more specific requirement to avoid writing the repetitive word.

Second, it was found that they spent comparably more time in classifying these words in two categories than they did in the first task session. One reason was that the words in this reading passage were more than those of first reading passage due to the

nature of content and the grammatical structure. Another was that the format was not so clear as to help them do the task easily.

Third, there was a missing step between the fourth and the fifth step of C-R activities. The fourth step required the participants to write down the words before 'is', with the purpose to make them conscious of a feature of 'is', and the fifth activity required them to make the difference between the word before 'am' and the words before 'is'. During the fifth activity, the participants wrote down the words before 'is' the same as in the fourth activity. Therefore, the fifth activity failed to help the participants understand the feature of 'is' (i.e. the single third party or pronouns before 'is').

The results (the time they spent in each activity and the scores they got for each activity) of four participants' completion of the activities are presented in the following table.

Table 3.6 The results of participants' completion of the treatment activities on 'is'

Treatment group/ participants		Step 1 Reading	Step 2 Reading comprehension		Step 3 Consciousness-raising(FonF)/ Remembering(FonM)		Step 4 Reconstruction	
		Time (min)	Time (min)	Score Full=12	Time (min)	Score Full=69	Time (min)	Score Full=16
FonF	No.1	8'	18'	12	55'	44	15'	13
	No.2	7'	19'	11	57'	45	16'	12
FonM	No.3	7'	17'	12	17'	/	20'	5
	No.4	8'	15'	11	18'	/	18'	4

As presented in the table, the participants in the FonMF group achieved higher accuracy in the reading comprehension than they did with the 'am' item, which was also found in the consciousness-raising activity and the reconstruction activity. As

for the FonM group, two participants obtained high scores in the reading comprehension, but still low scores in the reconstruction activity.

3.2.2.3.2 Interview

At this phase, the same questions as the prior task session on whether the directions and pictures that they did not understand and what they thought about the activities were also addressed to the participants. Concerned with the directions of the activities, the participants reported that they were clear about the directions of the activities, because these activities were similar to those at the last session that they still remembered. Concerned with the pictures, they reported that they were not sure about the meaning of the picture of item 4 in the step. Concerned with their opinions about the activities, they commented that they had some difficulties in summarizing the common features of the words before 'is', which was corresponding to their answer sheet on this activities from observation.

3.2.2.3.3 Revision of the treatment on 'is'

First, I would add a special claim that requires the participants to avoid writing the repetitive word to the direction in respondent to the first problem discussed above.

As for the second problem that the format of the second step of C-R activities should be improved to be easier and clearer for the participants to do, I would modify the format of the second activity so as to help the participants do it more easily and clearly (see Appendix 2).

As for the third problem that there was a missing step between the fourth and the fifth step of C-R activities, I would add a question to ask the participants to think about the common feature of words before 'is', and provide the answer in the answer key. The purpose of this revision was to build up the missing link between the fourth and the fifth step (i.e. to search the common feature of words before 'is'). In so doing, the participants could reflect the concept into the next activity (to compare the differences of words before 'am' and 'is').

3.2.2.4 First tryout of the treatment on 'are'

Based on the problems occurred in the first and second task session, correspondent revisions were made to the third task design before it was implemented.

At this phase, one new problem occurred in the fourth step of C-R activities. The participants did not do it well, since the direction of the step was not specific. The fourth step was to ask the participants to find the words before 'are', the purpose was to make the participants aware of the subjects before 'are'. However, since the 'words' was too vague, the participants found the words before are as such: from the sentence 'Linus and I are best friends', they found the words before 'are' as 'I', which should have been as 'Linus and I'. Therefore, a specific direction should be added.

The second problem occurred in the reconstruction activity. It was found that the omission of the verb 'are' occurred more than the verb 'am' and 'is', which were found in the results of the reconstruction activity (see the following table). It indicated

that the increase of the subject raised the complexity of the activity, which led to the decrease of the accuracy on the verb 'are' activity.

Another problem occurred in this activity was that the participants had some difficulties in converting the person noun to the personal pronoun (i.e., they could not convert 'Linus and I' as 'we', 'Lucy and Linus as 'they'). The written output showed the participants were confused at the description of the person and personal noun, which aroused the misuse of the verb 'is' and 'are' (they wrote sentences as "tl is are best friends" which should be "we are best friends" or "Linus and I are best friends").

The results of the activity of completion done by the four participants were presented in the following table. In the activities, one blank is worth one point. Thus, the scores meant how many correct blanks the participants filled in.

Table 3.7 The results of participants' completion of the treatment activities on 'are'

Treatment group/ participants		Step 1 Reading	Step 2 Reading comprehension		Step 3 Consciousness-raising(FonF)/ Remembering(FonM)		Step 4 Reconstruction	
		Time (min)	Time (min)	Score Full=8	Time (min)	Score Full=44	Time (min)	Score Full=8
FonMF	No.1	5'	19'	8	30'	36	15'	4
	No.2	4'	20'	8	29'	34	13'	5
FonM	No.3	5'	15'	7	12'	/	8'	1
	No.4	4'	12'	8	14'	/	9'	1

As presented in the table, the participants in the two treatment groups showed not many differences in the reading comprehension activities, but they showed great differences in the reconstruction activity, with average score above 5 obtained by the FonMF group versus average score 1 obtained by the FonM group. However,

compared with the last session, the scores obtained in the reconstruction activity of the FonMF group were low. From their answers in the written sheet, it was found the most frequent mistakes they made was still the omission of the target form 'are', and the less frequent mistakes was the misuse of 'is' and 'are'. Regarding to this point, the participants were interviewed why they omitted the verb 'are'. One participant in FonMF group reported that he neglected due to the carelessness, the other reported that she mainly focused on the meaning of the picture and forgot the verb 'are'. Two participants in the FonM group reported that they forgot the verb 'are' and their attentions were primarily on the interpreting the meaning of the picture.

3.2.2.4.1 Revision of the treatment on 'are'

In cope with the problem that occurred in the implementation phase, several revisions were made to the task design. First, the directions of the fourth step of C-R activities were improved to be more specific as 'pay attention to how many people are mentioned before 'are'', followed with an example.

Second, regarding to the problem that the participants had difficulties in converting the person noun and the personal pronoun, an activity was developed to classify the person nouns to the personal pronouns (e.g. ask them to recognize 'Linus and I' belong to 'we'), after they found out the person nouns and personal pronouns before the verb 'are'.

Another revision to deal with the omission of the verb 'are' in the reconstruction activity was to provide the definite amount of blanks for all of the four participants to

fill, in place of a blank space for them to write. In so doing, it could raise their awareness of using the target verb and decrease the cognitive load on output.

3.2.2.5 First tryout of the posttests

The posttests were the same with the pretests excerpt for some revisions that were made in the posttests. The results of the posttests were presented in Table 3.8 and Table 3.9.

Table 3.8 The results of grammatical knowledge posttest

Participant No.		Test score (full score = 20)	Time (min)	No. of correct items		
				Item on 'am'	Item on 'is'	Item on 'are'
FonMF	No.1	12	7'	1,2,3,4,6,7	8,9,10,11,14	17
	No.2	15	8'	1,2,3,5,6,7	8,9,10,11,14,15	16,19,20
FonM	No.3	7	6'	2, 5,6	10, 11, 13,	16
	No.4	8	7'	1, 2, 3, 5	9, 10, 14	16

As shown in Table 3.6, compared with the pretest, the participants in the FonMF obtained higher scores than the pretest and showed a gap between the scores the participants in the FonM group. In addition, the participants in the FonM group did not change much in the test scores and the correct items. The test scores improved in the FonMF group indicated the effects of the treatment, which were confirmed in the interview. Further, the test scores that did not change much for the FonM group shed the light on the effects of focus-on-form.

Table 3.9 The results of oral production post-test

Participant No.		Time of preparation (min)	Time of performance (second)	Score (accuracy level)
FonMF	No.1	4'	86"	7
	No.2	5'	78"	6
FonM	No.3	3'	42"	3
	No.4	3'	56"	3

As shown in Table 3.9, compared with the pretest, the participants in the FonMF obtained higher scores than the pretest and showed a gap between the scores the participants in the FonM group. In addition, the participants in the FonM group did not change much in the test scores and the correct items. The test scores improved in the FonMF group indicated the effects of the treatment, which were confirmed in the interview. Further, the test scores that did not change much for the FonM group shed the light on the effects of focus-on-form.

Based on the observation of the participants' oral performance, it was found that all of four participants only produced sentences concerned with themselves. They barely produced sentences contained 'is' or 'are'. Hence, the oral test direction was revised to enable learners to produce more target structures.

3.2.2.5.1 Revision of the posttests

The directions were made more specific to provide gist that could help participants know what to say and how to organize the language (see details in Appendix VI and VII).

Another problem occurred was that some of the participants did not have the photos with their friends. Hence, this requirement had to be changed to make

convenient for participants. The participants were asked to draw three people (himself, one of his/her girl friend, one of his/her boy friend) briefly. The drawing time was limited to 1 minute so as not to take much time.

3.2.3 Second tryout of the research tools

Another four participants were selected to take part in the second tryout of the research tools. At this phase, the results of the each research tools gained better effects than those in the first tryout. There were no problems on the directions and pictures. Generally speaking, the two participants in the FonMF group improved a lot in each activity compared with the participants in the first tryout. The following table presents the comparison of each research tools that can be quantified in scores.

Table 3.10 Comparison of first tryout and second tryout of GK pretest.

Participant No.		Test score (full score = 20)	Time (min)	No. of correct items		
				Item on 'am'	Item on 'is'	Item on 'are'
FonMF	No.1	5	10'	1, 7	12, 14	17
	No.2	5	13'	2, 4	10, 13	16
	No.1 #	5	10'	1, 4	12, 15	17
	No.2 #	5	12'	2, 7	10, 14	16
FonM	No.3	7	11'	2, 5	10, 11, 13,	16, 18
	No.4	8	14'	1, 2, 5	9, 10, 14	16, 17
	No.3 #	7	12'	1,7	10, 11, 14	16, 17
	No.4 #	8	13'	1,4, 7	9, 10, 11	16

As shown in Table 3.10, it was found that there were not much differences between two tryouts. In addition, the participants in the second tryout did not report there were pictures they were not clear. It indicated that the pretests could be conducted in the main study.

Table 3.11 Comparison of first tryout and second tryout of OP pretest.

Participant No.		Time of preparation (min)	Time of performance (second)	Score
FonMF	No.1	2'	24"	2
	No.2	2'	32"	2
	No.1#	2'	36"	3
	No.2#	3'	28"	3
FonM	No.3	3'	29"	3
	No.4	3'	37"	3
	No.3#	2'	29"	2
	No.4#	3'	36"	3

As shown in Table 3.11, there was not much difference between two tryouts on the participants' oral production.

Table 3.12 Comparison of first tryout and second tryout of the task on 'am'

Treatment group/ participants		Step 1 Reading	Step 2 Reading comprehension		Step 3 Consciousness-raising(FonF)/ Remembering(FonM)		Step 4 Reconstruction	
		Time (min)	Time (min)	Score Full=8	Time (min)	Score Full=28	Time (min)	Score Full=8
FonMF	No.1	5'	8'	8	32'	13	10'	5
	No.2	4'	9'	6	35'	12	8'	6
	No.1#	5'	7'	8	30'	16	7'	8
	No.2#	5'	8'	8	28'	18	9'	7
FonM	No.3	3'	8'	6	8'	/	12'	3
	No.4	4'	9'	7	7'	/	10'	3
	No.3#	4'	8'	7	7'	/	9'	3
	No.4#	5'	7'	8	7'	/	10'	2

As shown in Table 3.12, two participants of FonMF group gained higher scores in each activity. A greater improvement was found in Step 4 activity in the second tryout than that in the first tryout. It indicated the task design was improved to bring effects.

Table 3.13 Comparison of first tryout and second tryout of the task on 'is'

Treatment group/ participants		Step 1 reading	Step 2 Reading comprehension		Step 3 Consciousness-Raising(FonF)/ Remembering(FonM)		Step 4 Reconstruction	
		Time (min)	Time (min)	Score Full=12	Time (min)	Score Full=69	Time (min)	Score Full=16
FonMF	No.1	8'	18'	12	55'	44	15'	13
	No.2	7'	19'	11	57'	45	16'	12
	No.1#	7'	15'	12	55'	50	15'	14
	No.2#	8'	14'	12	56'	52	14'	15
FonM	No.3	7'	17'	12	17'	/	20'	5
	No.4	8'	15'	11	18'	/	18'	4
	No.3#	7'	17'	12	16'	/	17'	4
	No.4#	8'	16'	11	17'	/	18'	3

As shown in Table 3.13, the two participants of FonMF group obtained higher scores in each activity, especially in the step 4 activity than they did in the first tryout. It suggested that the second tryout achieved the purposes.

Table 3.14 Comparison of first tryout and second tryout of task on 'are'

Treatment group/ participants		Step 1 reading	Step 2 Reading comprehension		Step 3 Consciousness-Raising(FonF)/ Remembering(FonM)		Step 4 Reconstruction	
		Time (min)	Time (min)	Score Full=8	Time (min)	Score Full=44	Time (min)	Score Full=8
FonMF	No.1	5'	19'	8	30'	36	15'	4
	No.2	4'	20'	8	29'	34	13'	5
	No.1#	5'	18'	8	28'	36	14'	7
	No.2#	4'	17'	8	29'	34	12'	8
FonM	No.3	5'	15'	7	12'	/	8'	1
	No.4	4'	12'	8	14'	/	9'	1
	No.3#	4'	12'	7	12'	/	8'	1
	No.4#	4'	14'	8	13'	/	7'	2

As shown in Table 3.14, likewise, the two participants of the FonMF group gained higher scores than they did in each activity, especially in the step 4 activity. It suggested that the improvements of the task design of this session took effects.

Table 3.15 Comparison of first tryout and second tryout of task on GK posttest

Participant No.		Test score (full score = 20)	Time (min)	No. of correct items		
				Item on 'am'	Item on 'is'	Item on 'are'
FonMF	No.1	12	7'	1,2,3,4,6,7	8,9,10,11,14	17
	No.2	15	8'	1,2,3,5,6,7	8,9,10,14,15	16,19,20
	No.1 #	17	7'	1,2,3, 4,5,6,7	8,9,12, 13,14,	16,19,20
	No.2 #	18	6'	1,2,3, 4,5,6,7	8,9,10,11, 13,14,15	16,17,19,20
FonM	No.3	7	6'	2, 5,6	10, 11, 13,	16
	No.4	8	7'	1, 2, 3,5	9, 10, 14	16, 17
	No.3 #	7	5'	1,6	10, 11, 14	16, 17
	No.4 #	7	6'	1,4, 7	9, 10, 11	16

As shown in Table 3.15, the two participants of the FonMF group achieved higher scores in the GK posttest in the second tryout than they did in the first tryout. It indicated the improvements of the task design and the posttest had brought the treatment into effects.

Table 3.16 Comparison of first tryout and second tryout of OP posttest

Participant No.		Time of preparation (min)	Time of performance (second)	Score (accuracy level)
FonMF	No.1	4'	86"	7
	No.2	5'	78"	6
	No.1#	6'	106"	10
	No.2#	5'	117"	12
FonM	No.3	3'	42"	3
	No.4	3'	56"	3
	No.3#	3'	63"	4
	No.4#	4'	59"	5

As shown in Table 3.16, the two participants of the FonMF group achieved higher scores in the OP posttest in the second tryout than they did in the first tryout. It indicated the improvements of the OP posttest had brought the treatment into effects.

3.3 Research tools

All of the research tools were tried out in two pilot studies. Based on the findings of the pilot studies, each research tool was finally established as follows.

3.3.1 Reading material

The reading material consisted of three short passages in which the grammatical structures of the copula *be* were embedded. The three passages were written by the researcher herself. In writing the reading passages, I considered the factors relating to reading comprehension to develop the reading passages. The participants' language proficiency level and their vocabulary size were two main factors being considered. In addition, in reference to the participants' previous text books, I used words that they had learned, with 12 new words. These words were glossed below the passage. The reading content should be fun and interesting for young L2 learners at this level, thus, I used well-known and favored cartoon characters by Chinese children, Snoopy. Furthermore, to introduce the copula *be*, I drew on the suggestion that grammatical items should be taught separately (Skehan, 1996; Ellis, 2003). Hence, the reading passages were developed based on the following variables (summarized in Figure 3.7).

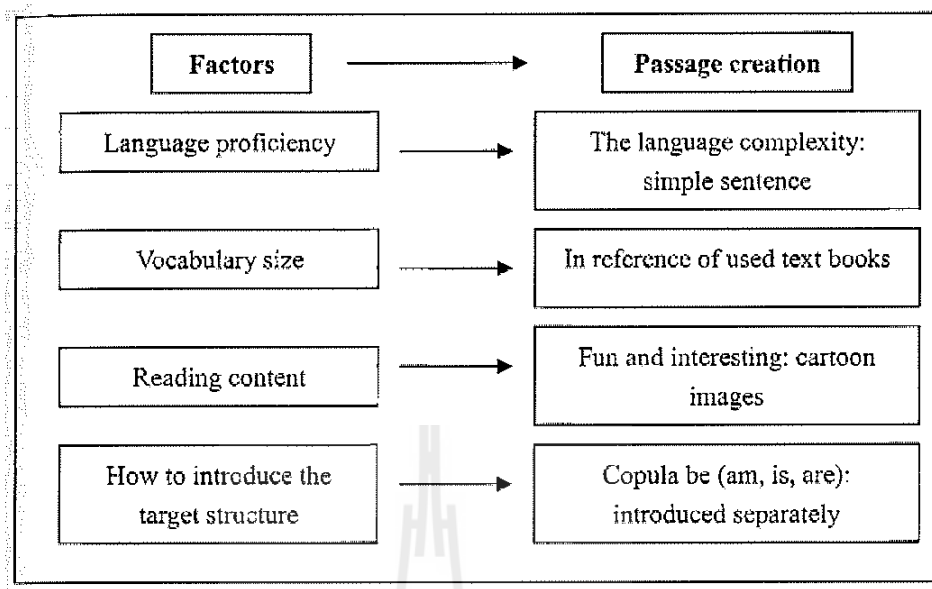


Figure 3.7 The criteria for creating the reading passages

I introduced each of a copula *be*, *am/is/are* respectively in each reading passage, for the participants could deal with one linguistic item at a time. I attached some pictures to help the participants understand the content, as well as making the reading materials look attractive and motivating.

The first passage was about a self-introduction of Charlie Brown, the leading actor of Peanuts Gang. It was to involve the usage of the target form *am*. The second one is the introduction of Charlie Brown's pet and his best friend and his sister, the purpose of which is to lead in the usage of *is*. The third one is the introduction of Charlie Brown's groups of friends, the purpose of which is to present the usage of *are* (see sample passages in Appendix I).

3.3.1.1 Reading passages for the FonMF and the FonM treatment

The reading passages used for the FonMF treatment were textural enhanced (TE). TE, as an approach of input enhancement (see full details in Section 2.6.2.2), aims to draw learners' perceptual attention to the copula be (am, is, are). By this mold, the target form (copula *be*) was typographically bolded and colored (blue for *am*, green for *is*, red for *are*). Based on Simard's study (2009), the combination of these techniques gained best effects for TE. Figure 3.8 is an example of the TE passage.

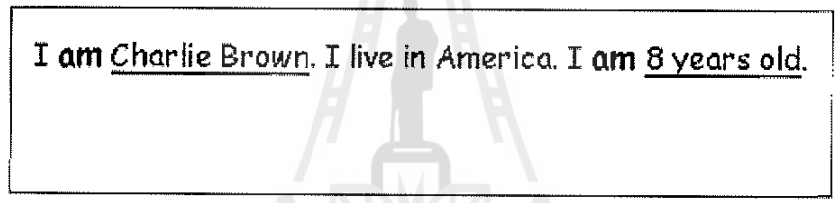


Figure 3.8 An example of TE technique used in the passage

The reading passages used in the FonM group were not using TE. That is, the target form was not typographically bolded and colored. Figure 3.9 is an example of the plain passage.

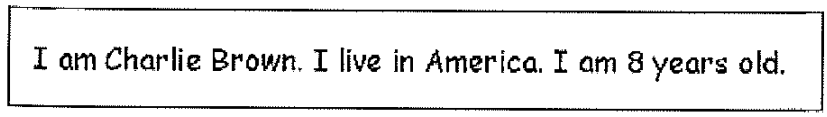


Figure 3.9 An example of a plain passage used for FonM group

3.3.2 Reading comprehension activity

The activity aimed to make sure that the participants comprehend the meaning of each passage, because L2 learners read for meaning first. The participants selected

a sentence from the text for each picture. The pictures checked that whether the participants understood the sentence. After they finished the matching, they checked their answers with the answer key. If all their answers were right, it means that they comprehended the text. If one of their answers was wrong, they might reread the text and comprehend it. The activity took 10 minutes. An example of the activity was presented in Figure 3.10.

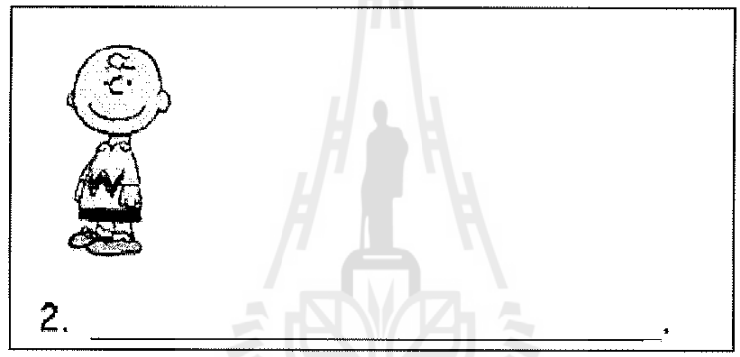


Figure 3.10 An example of reading comprehension activity

3.3.3 C-R activity for the FonMF treatment

After the participants comprehend the passage, their attentions were drawn to the form more explicitly by completing a series of consciousness-raising activities (C-R activities). The C-R activities took the form of problem-solving activity. The participants found out how the copula *be*, *am/is/are*, function. The rationale under the C-R activity is related to the noticing process that has been investigated and sustained by a large number of studies to date (i.e. Schmidt, 1993; Tomlin & Villa, 1994; Fotos, 1994; Robinson, 1995; Leow, 1997; Gass, 1997; Pica et al, 2006). First, according to

Pica et al. (2006), the noticing process can be operationalized in various ways: (1) simple noticing of form, (2) noticing the differences, (3) noticing the gap, (4) noticing form, function, and meaning relationships. These steps reflect how L2 learners process the input for further processing. Therefore, the C-R activity was designed based on this rationale. It consisted of 5 parts. The noticing processes across C-R activities were summarized in the Table 3.17.

Table 3.17 Noticing processes across C-R task steps

Step	Activities	Noticing processes
1	Identifying words after the copula *be*	Simple noticing of form
2	Classifying words after the copula be	Noticing of differences
3	Generalizing	Noticing the gap
4	Classifying words before the copula be	Noticing of differences
5	Cross-language exploration	Noticing form, function, and meaning relationships, characteristic of awareness

In the first part, participants wrote down the underlined words that followed the target form. The words after the target form *am/is/are* were underlined, because some words are phrases or compound words dependent on the content. In order to reduce the confusion, any single words, phrases, compound words were underlined to be as an integrated part. This step exemplified the first process—simple noticing of form, by first making learners separate a target form in isolation or in the word or phrase in which it appeared in a passage. The purpose of this activity was to help learners become

more aware of the use of target form. See an example of this part in Figure 3.11.

1. Write every underlined word that follows the verb 'am' in the text on page 1:

把课文里每一个跟在 'am' 后的划横线上的词写在下列横线上。

_____, _____, _____, _____,

_____, _____, _____, _____,

_____, _____, _____, _____,

Figure 3.11 An example of the first part of the C-R activities

In the second part, the participants classified these words they had found in the first part into two groups. These words following *am/is/are* were nouns or adjectives. The participants had to differentiate the noun and the adjective. The purpose of the activity was to make the participants notice the difference. They would have to offer their judgment about these words. It might not be easy for them to differentiate the nouns and the adjectives at their first try. However, they could obtain the positive feedback from the answer key after finishing their answers. In this activity, the participants first segmented, or extracted the differences between forms. Then they would notice the gap between what they have thought about the form and what the form should be like. See an example of this part in Figure 3.12.

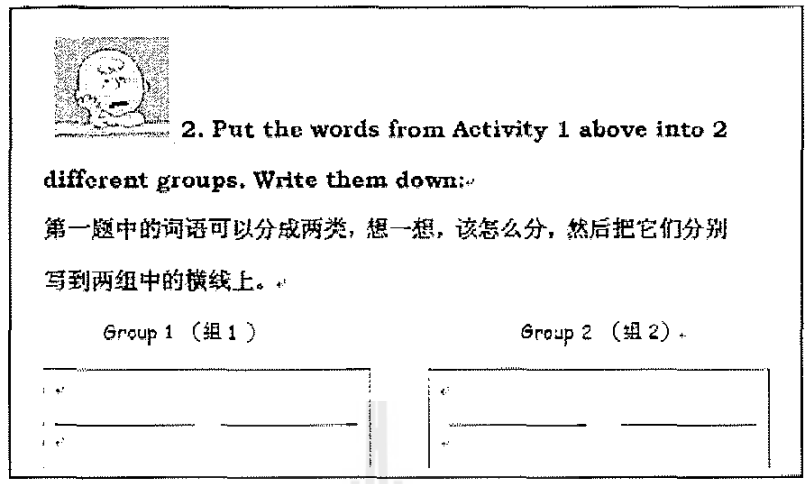


Figure 3.12 An example of the second part of the C-R activities

In the third part, the participants needed to figure out the different part of speech of each group. The purpose of this activity was to encourage the participants to notice the differences in deeper process. An example of this part is displayed in Figure 3.13.

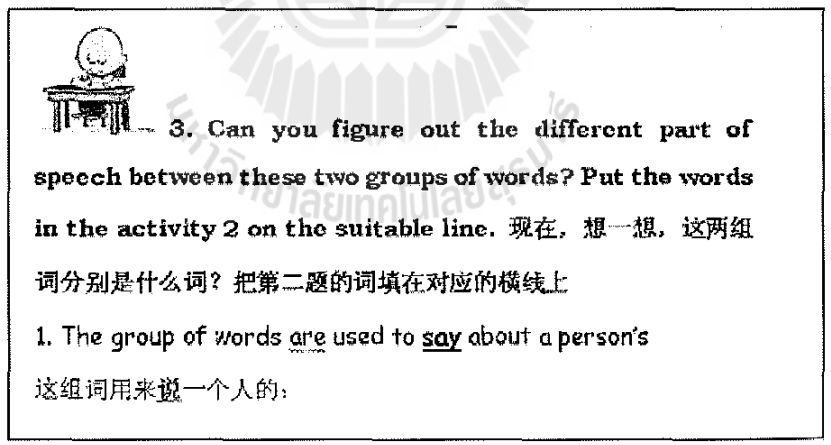


Figure 3.13 An example of the third part of the C-R activities

In the fourth part, they needed find out the words before *am/is/are*. It also aimed to encourage learners to find out another characteristic of the copula *be*. After they search from the passage, they would find that only the word 'I' is before 'am'; the

words before 'is' are those representing single form, such as 'he, she, it, etc'; the words before 'are' are those representing plural forms, such as 'we, they, etc'. The purpose of this activity is still to encourage the participants to notice the differences of the form. An example of this part is presented as in the Figure 3.14.

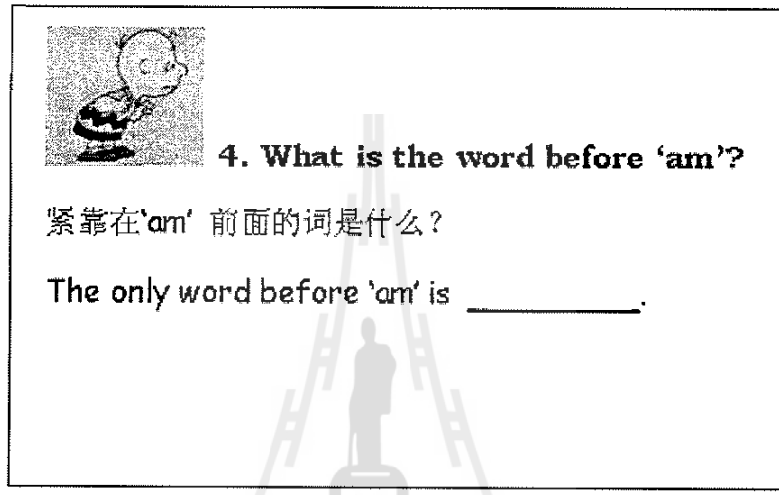


Figure 3.14 An example of the fourth part in the C-R activities

In the fifth part, they needed to figure out when people use *am/is/are*. They used Chinese to write down five situations when people need to use *am/is/are*. Figure 3.15 is an example of guidance to elicit the participants to form how am/is/are functions.

5. Figure out what people use 'am' to tell:

结合上一题，想一想，英语里'am'可以用来表达什么.（用中文表达）。

1. When people say (当人们说) _____

2. When people say (当人们说) _____

3. When people say (当人们说) _____

4. When people say (当人们说) _____

Figure 3.15 An example of the fifth part in the C-R activities

The activity is in response to the fourth process that engages the participants to notice function and meaning relationships.

3.3.4 Reconstruction activity

This activity aimed to induce the participants to integrate meaning, form and function and by means of output. Each participant supposed he/she was Charlie Brown and introduced himself/herself. That is, he/she had a self-introduction. But it was not a free production activity. They were provided with a series of pictures and words as prompts to produce sentences containing the copula *be*. They needed to write a sentence to describe each picture by choosing a prompt word from the jumbled words. Each picture was only provided with a prompt word. In so doing, the participants had to consider matching the meaning of the pictures and the form of the words. The controlled activity instead of a free production one would help to fix the copula *be* in the participants' minds, making it more likely that they would become a natural part of their productive repertoire. The rationale under this activity is in line with the fourth process

that engages the participants to notice form, function, and meaning relationships, characteristic of awareness. See an example of this part in the Figure 3.16.

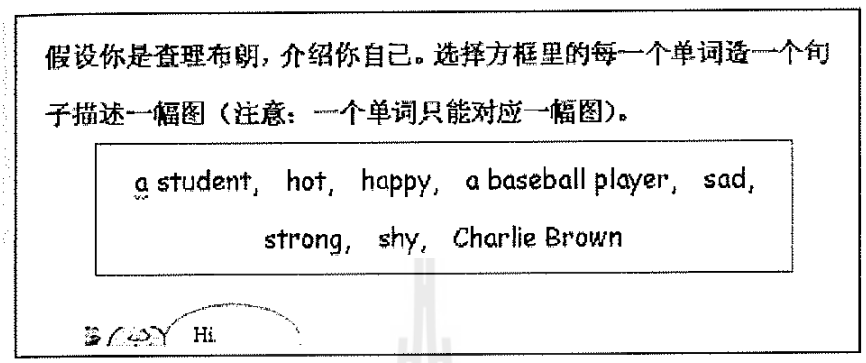


Figure 3.16 An example of the fifth part of the C-R activities

3.3.5 Pretest, posttest and delayed posttest

This study used one test as pretest, posttest and the delayed test. The advantage of using one version of test was that it could directly observe the process of what the participants gained. The tests consisted of a vocabulary test, which was only used in the pretest to measure the participants' vocabulary ability (see details in Section 3.3.5.1), a grammatical knowledge test (see details in Section 3.3.5.2), and an oral production test (see details in Section 3.3.5.3).

The pre-tests were administered to the participants two weeks before the beginning of the treatment period. The pre-tests were also used to eliminate participants from the original pool.

A post-test was administered immediately after the treatment to measure the effects of instructional treatments. It involved the grammatical knowledge test and an oral production test. The vocabulary test was excluded.

A delayed posttest was administered three weeks after the posttests, to measure the long-term effects of instructional treatments on the participants' gains in the copula *be*.

3.3.5.1 Vocabulary test

The majority of content words were listed in a piece of paper (see the full details of the test paper in Appendix VIII). The participants needed to write down the Chinese meaning to the English words. The vocabulary test was used to ensure the participants had certain vocabulary capacity so that they had no problem in reading the task passages.

3.3.5.2 Grammatical knowledge test

The grammatical knowledge test took the form of multiple-choice recognition test (see full details in Appendix IV) in which learners had very limited time to decide which of the four structures was right. This form of test has been widely adopted as a measure of assessing intake of the target structures (e.g. Leow, 1997; Rosa & O'Neill, 1999). The test consisted of 20 items. The design of the test in terms of the quantity of the test item was based on the previous research in which the quantity of test item was around 20 or 30 items (e.g. 30 sentences in Robinson, 1996; 28 sentences in Izumi, et al, 1999; 36 sentences in Izumi, 2002). Additionally, the item quantity was dependent on the content of the task. The test took 15 minutes which was determined by the pilot study.

It consisted of 20 items. Each item contained four choices of sentences that intended to describing a picture. The participants were asked to choose a correct one among four

choices to match the picture, with three incorrect sentences as distracters. Figure 3.17 is a sample of a multiple-choice recognition test item from grammatical knowledge test.

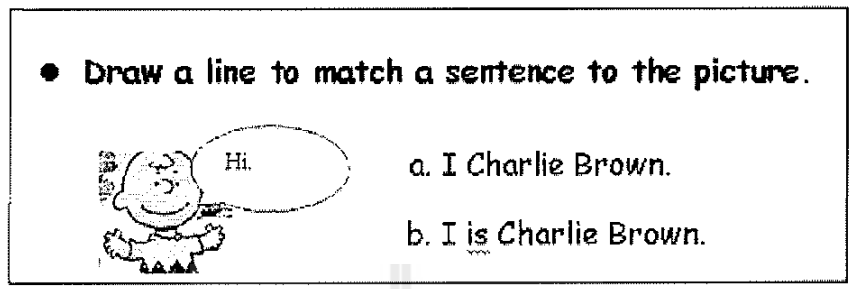


Figure 3.17 An example of the grammatical knowledge test

Of the 20 test items, 7 items were developed for the usage of *am*, 8 items were developed for the usage of *is*, and 5 items were developed for the usage of *are*. These items mainly investigated the agreement of the subject and the copula *be*, the structure *be* + noun and *be* + adjective, which were introduced in the reading passage. In order to control for possible test effects and ensure that the test measured learners' syntactic knowledge rather than their vocabulary, vocabulary used in the test was carefully controlled and limited to what the participants had encountered in the previous reading passages and their learned textbooks. The development of the distracter sentences were based on the Chinese L2 learners' most frequent errors on this target structure, which were found in many related research studies (i.e. Lee, 2004; Chan, 2004) and empirical experience of the researcher as an English instructor.

3.3.5.3 Oral production test

In the original design, the oral test was to be a test of free production (i.e. requiring the participants to engage in meaning-oriented language use that would push

them to draw on their implicit language knowledge). However, the primary goal of the oral test was to assess the use of the target grammatical structures in a practical situation. That is, the test was not to focus on grammar knowledge, but on the participants' ability to use the grammar structures accurately and appropriately through speaking. Thus, the oral production test was designed as a picture description task (see full details in Appendix VI). Each participant drew a picture of three people (he himself, his girl friend and his boy friend), because most of the participants did not have a photo with his friends. On the other hand, in order to induce them to use the copula *is*, they then introduced each person in the photo.

The production test time took 6 minutes. Each participant had 3 minutes to prepare (1 minute for drawing and 2 minutes for thinking). Based on the previous research concerned with task performance (e.g. Skehan & Foster, 1999; Ortega, 1999; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), participants performed better with a planning time than those without. Each participant had 3 minutes to perform. They got a written instruction of how to perform the speaking task. Each participant got a recording device to record while they were performing. Their descriptions were recorded and transcribed afterward.

The assessment of the oral performance were measured based on the qualities of the fluency, accuracy and complexity (see a more details in Section 3.4.2).

3.3.6 Opinion questionnaire

The opinion questionnaire aimed to investigate learners' opinions toward the effects of the treatment that they received. Question items had two choices *Yes* and *No*.

Because too many measure scales (i.e. strongly agree, somewhat agree, not sure, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree) would be complicated and confusing to young participants. The researcher constructed a series of questions (see details in Appendix IX-XII) based on what Cohen (1989) suggests, researchers can construct questions based on the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, predication, or explanation. The constructing of the questionnaires was displayed in the Table 3.18.

Table 3.18 The construction of a questionnaire

Research tools	Aims	Formative Questions
Pre-test	To check whether design of the pre-test is effective (i.e. language use / pictures: clear, unclear), whether the Ps have zero or few knowledge about the copula *be*	Now I think of the questions to ask the Ps in order to get their opinions whether the design of the pre-test is effective
Implementation of the task design	To check whether the implementation is effective	Now I think of the questions to ask the Ps in order to get their opinions whether the implementation is effective
Research Objectives	To check whether the target participants have knowledge about the copula *be*	Now I think of the questions to ask the Ps in order to get their opinions whether the pre-test can actually tell their ability about the copula *be*

To increase the efficiency of the methods, the questionnaire were tested in the two pilot studies and modified based on the problem that occurred. The questionnaires were administered with the presence of the researcher. In so doing, it could build the rapport

between participants and the researcher, which might encourage participates to pay serious attention to answer the questions rather than treat the questions casually.

However, data from structured questionnaires may be superficial (Robson, 1993), the information obtained from this questionnaire combined with data from a semi-structured interview would be more reliable.

3.3.7 Semi-structured interview

The main purpose of the semi-structured interview was to gain more detailed information and a deeper understanding about the participants' thoughts toward the treatments. A semi-structured interview was administered immediately after the questionnaires were finished, to elicit more detailed information about their thoughts on the questionnaire items.

The interview questions were derived from the questions in the questionnaire that needed to be made more specific.

All of the participants were interviewed one by one in Chinese, the participants' L1, to assure the participants can understand questions and express themselves better and deeper. Each interview took 10 minutes. All interviews were tape recorded, and transcribed.

3.4 Procedures for data collection

3.4.1 Collecting date from the pretests

The pre-tests (the vocabulary test, the grammatical knowledge test and oral production test) were conducted among the original students pool. They were

conducted in the classroom as the participants had routine English class. Their English teachers were responsible for the administration of the tests. The participants had two times of English class sessions each week. The vocabulary test and the grammatical knowledge test were administered separately in each class session, for it was to ensure the test would not disturb the participants' normal class instruction and arouse students' nervousness of the test. The teacher spared a few minutes (5 minutes for the vocabulary test; 10 minutes for the grammatical knowledge) for the tests from the class time. Before the test, the students were told by their teachers that it was just an exercise.

After the tests, the test scores were coded by the researcher. Based on the pre-test scores and their previous achievement scores, the participants who got scores up than 80 on the vocabulary test, the participants who got scores lower than 12 on the grammatical knowledge, and the participants who produced not more than 5 sentences containing the copula *be*, were selected as the participants for the research study.

3.4.2 Collecting data from the posttests and delayed posttests

The posttests and delayed posttests consisted of the grammatical knowledge test and the oral production test. Data were collected by the researcher in individual sessions with each small group. The site for the research was in the same classroom they received the treatments in the participants' school.

Data from the participants' grammatical knowledge were gathered from their test paper. After they finished the paper and pen test, they had 5 minutes to rest and took the oral production.

Data from the participants' oral performance were gathered from the recordings of their oral production and was transcribed later. Each participant got a recording device to record their own oral production.

3.4.3 Collecting data from the questionnaires and interviews

The purpose of the questionnaire was mainly to elicit more information about the participants' thinking and feeling of the effects of FonMF treatment that could not reflect in the written and oral tests, and served as a complement part for the quantitative data in Research Question 1. On this ground, the closed questions encouraged the participants to reflect on their perceived effects of FonMF treatment which involved two major points: their perceptions on the effects of textual enhancement (TE) and the effects of FonMF activities helping them be conscious how the verb 'be' is used.

3.5 Data scoring and coding

3.5.1 Scoring method

In scoring the grammatical knowledge tests (data collected from the pre-post-delayed post- test), 1 point was given every time if the correct sentence was chosen and 0 if the answer was incorrect. The maximum score was 20.

3.5.2 Measures of oral performance

The participants' oral performance was transcribed by two trained research assistants and I, and the transcripts were checked by the researchers. Following the previous research studies of measures of the participants' oral performance (i.e.

Crookes, 1989; Foster and Skehan, 1996; Wendel, 1997; Bygate, 2001), the measures were operationalised as follows.

3.5.2.1 Accuracy

Accuracy was measured by calculating the percentage of error-free sentences. There are two factors considered in analyzing the accurate speech of the present study. First, the domain of errors in the present study referred to the (1) disagreement of subject and be, (2) the omission of be between subject and the noun, or the adjective. The other syntactic errors, such as the omission of indefinite/definite articles, the misuse of the lexical form other than the target form, etc would not be considered as errors, for such errors were not coped with in the present study. Second, in cases where participants attempted to self-correct and they produced a correct form and then changed it into an incorrect form, it was coded as errors, or vice versa. Inter-rater reliability for the accuracy measure was 99.12%.

3.5.2.2 Complexity

Complexity was measured by the syntactic variety. Syntactic variety in the present study referred to the total number of sentences that contain the target-structures produced in the oral performance. The quantity of target structure sentences referred to the total number of copula *be* (am, is, are) sentences produced by the participants, including the correct form and incorrect form that was target-like. Inter-rater reliability was 99.25%.

An example (excerpted from a participant in FonF group in posttest) of how the number of target structure sentences were identified and counted presented as follows:

I am Tan Renbo. My English name is Jack. I a student. I like music. I am tall. He Chen Xiyi. He a friend. He like dog.

The number of target structure sentences used in above speech was identified as:

①I am Tan Renbo. ②My English name is Jack. ③I a student (target-like). I like music (not target structures). ④I am tall. ⑤He Chen Xiyi (target-like). ⑥He a friend (target-like). He like dog (not target structures).

As shown in the example, there are altogether six target-structured sentences in this oral production by the participants.

3.5.2.3 Fluency

Fluency was calculated in terms of number of syllables per minute. It involved two measures: Rate A and Rate B.

Rate A: the number of syllables within each descriptive speech, divided by its total articulation time (the number of seconds) and multiplied the result by 60. Inter-rater reliability for Rate A was 98.45%.

Rate B: as in Rate A, the number of syllables, divided by the total articulation time (the number of seconds) and multiplied the result by sixty, excluding syllables, words, phrases that were repeated, reformulated, or replaced. Inter-rater reliability for Rate B was 98%.

3.5.3 Data from the questionnaire and the interview

The answers to the questionnaires were tallied by the percentage of participants' ratings. The interview data were transcribed to interpret the results of quantitative data. Responses to attitude items were scored on a two-point Likert scale, with the options of 1—Yes, 2—No, The ratings were tallied by frequency, followed with the interviews and their comments as a complementation to support the result of the questionnaires.

3.6 Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used in this study to answer the two general research questions:

Research Question 1

What are the effects of the two treatments (FonMF and FonM) on the Chinese EFL learners' gains in the grammatical knowledge about the copular *be* and their ability to use the copula *be* in the oral performance?

To answer Research Question 1, this study examined whether the FonMF group outperformed the FonM group in performance with the copula *be* in the grammatical knowledge test and the oral production test, as measured by immediate and delayed post-tests. A series of independent t-tests were used to compare the performance of each of the two groups on the grammatical knowledge pretest and oral production pretest, posttest and delayed posttest.

Research Question 2

What are Chinese EFL learners' attitudes toward the effectiveness of the two types of treatment on the level of gains of the copula *be* and their ability to use the target form in the oral performance?

To answer Research Question 2, qualitative data analysis was involved based on the information from questionnaires and interviews conducted to the participants. The analysis revealed a clearer picture of their learning process responding to the treatments. The qualitative data further supported the results of quantitative data analysis and provided a better understanding of this issue.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Data analysis procedures and techniques are displayed in detail. The results of the investigation are presented in detail in response to each research question respectively.

4.1 Results for Research Question 1

In response to the first research question "What are the effects of the two treatments (FonMF and FonM) on the Chinese EFL learners' gain of grammatical knowledge about the copular *be* (is, am, are) and their ability to use the copula *be* in the oral performance?", the data concerning these treatments were examined in two ways: (1) a comparison of the grammatical knowledge posttest scores (GKT) and the oral production posttest scores (OPT) between the FonMF and the FonM group; (2) a comparison of the grammatical knowledge delayed posttest scores and the oral production delayed posttest scores between the FonMF and the FonM group.

4.1.1 Comparisons of the posttest scores between the FonMF and the FonM group

4.1.1.1 A comparison of the grammatical knowledge (GK) posttest scores

An independent sample *t*-test was used to compare mean scores of grammatical knowledge posttest of the FonMF and theFonM group. Table 4.1 shows a comparison of the mean scores of the two groups.

Table 4.1 The comparison of the GK posttest scores

Group	Mean	SD	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
FonMF	14.93	2.15	16.18	45.37	.000***
FonM	7.47	1.33			

*** $p < 0.001$

As shown in Table 4.1, there is a significant difference ($t = 16.18$, $p = .000$) of the FonMF and the FonM group in the mean scores of the GK posttest. This demonstrates that the FonMF group outperformed (with an average mean of 14.93) the FonM group (with an average mean of 7.47) in the GK posttest. In addition, a higher standard deviation (2.15) of the mean score of the FonMF group was found, compared with a lower standard deviation (1.33) of the FonM group. This indicates that some participants in the FonMF treatment achieved high scores in the GK posttest, whereas nearly all the participants in the FonM treatment achieved similar low scores.

4.1.1.2 A comparison of the oral production (OP) posttest scores

A series of independent *t*-tests were run to compare mean scores of the oral production posttest between the FonMF and the FonM group. Table 4.2 shows the comparison of mean scores in participants' performance on accuracy, complexity and fluency of their oral production posttest.

Table 4.2 The comparison of the OP posttest scores on level of accuracy, complexity and fluency

Speech quality	Group	Mean	SD	*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Accuracy	**FonMF**	7.60	2.03	13.46	38.82	.000***
	FonM	2.20	.85			
Complexity	**FonMF**	12.20	1.71	18.91	44.98	.000***
	FonM	5.47	.94			
Fluency (Rate A)	**FonMF**	51.74	16.57	5.47	35.94	.000***
	FonM	34.23	5.77			
(Rate B)	**FonMF**	47.25	13.70	6.39	37.63	.000***
	FonM	30.12	5.34			

*** $p < 0.001$

As presented in Table 4.2, the results show a significant difference (t = 13.46, p = .000) between FonMF and FonM group on the OP posttest scores on the level of accuracy. It reveals significant gains for FonMF group (with an average mean of 7.60) than the FonM group (with an average mean of 2.20) in participants' accuracy of the oral production.

Similarly, a significant difference (t = 18.91, p = .000) is found between the FonMF and the FonM group on the level of complexity. It suggests that the FonMF group outperformed (with a mean of 12.20) than the FonM group (with a mean of 5.47) in the complexity of the oral production.

Likewise, a significant difference (Rate A: $t = 5.47$, $p = .000$; Rate B: $t = 6.39$, $p = .000$) is found between FonMF and FonM group on the level of fluency. It indicates a significant main effects for the FonMF treatment (with mean averages of 51.74, 47.25) compared to the FonM treatment (with mean averages of 34.23, 30.12).

4.1.2 Comparisons of the delayed posttest scores between FonMF and FonM group

4.1.2.1 A comparison of the GK delayed posttest scores

An independent sample *t*-test was used to compare delayed posttests scores between the FonMF and the FonM group in the GK delayed posttest. Table 4.3 presents the comparison of mean scores for each group in the GK delayed posttest.

Table 4.3 The comparison of the GK delayed posttest scores

Group	Mean	SD	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
FonMF	13.87	1.91	16.15	46.53	.000***
FonM	7.23	1.19			

*** $p < 0.001$

As displayed in Table 4.3, there is a significant difference ($t = 16.15$, $p = .000$) between the FonMF and the FonM group in the GK delayed posttests. It can be assumed that the FonMF group (with a mean average of 13.87) gained better grammatical knowledge than the FonM group (with a mean average of 7.23).

4.1.2.2 A comparison of the OP delayed posttest scores

A series of independent *t*-tests were run to compare mean scores of participants' oral production on the level of accuracy, complexity and fluency in the

delayed posttest between FonMF and FonM group. Table 4.4 shows the comparison of mean scores on accuracy, complexity and fluency.

Table 4.4 The comparison of the OP delayed posttest on level of accuracy, complexity and fluency

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Accuracy	**FonMF**	5.53	1.43	12.48	37.55	.000***
	FonM	2.03	.56			
Complexity	**FonMF**	9.87	1.25	16.53	54.84	.000***
	FonM	5.07	.98			
Fluency	**FonMF**	46.32	14.86	4.25	37.23	.000***
(Rate A)	**FonM**	33.99	5.66			
(Rate B)	**FonMF**	41.24	13.65	4.05	38.24	.000***
	FonM	30.37	5.52			

*** $p < 0.001$

As presented in Table 4.4, the analyses shows that a significant difference (t = 12.48, p = .000) was found between the FonMF and the FonM group in the OP delayed posttest in the level of accuracy. It revealed significant gains for the FonMF group (with a mean average of 5.53) than the FonM group (with a mean average of 2.03) in participants' accuracy of the oral production.

Similarly, it found a significant difference (t = 16.53, p = .000) between the FonMF and the FonM group in the level of complexity. It suggested that the FonMF group outperformed (with a mean average of 9.87) than the FonM group (with a mean

average of 5.07) in the complexity of the oral production.

Likewise, the significant difference (Rate A: $t = 4.25$, $p = .000$; Rate B: $t = 4.05$, $p = .000$) was found between FonMF and FonM group on the level of fluency. It indicates an important difference for the FonMF treatment (with mean averages of 46.32, 41.24) compared to the FonM treatment (with mean averages of 33.99, 30.37).

As an example, the following table is an excerpt of transcriptions of a participant's oral production in the OP pretest and the OP posttest in each treatment.

Table 4.5 The example of excerpts of the participants' oral production in the OP pretest and the OP posttest of the two treatments

Tests	FonMF	FonM
Pretest	P6: *My name Zhou Linxi. My, Eh...I um like football. I like dog...She, eh.. play...* *Time: 58"*	P3: *My name Wang Zili. My, eh...I um like football. I...fast.She...eh...play PingPong.* *Time: 1'04"*
Posttest	P6: *I am Zhou Linxi. I am nine. I am is ugly. I like dog. She is Hua Chenglu. She is nine. She is a beautiful. She is Zhang Siyu. She is nine. She is ugly.* *Time: 1'04"*	P3: *I am Wang Zili. I en... I like football. I eh ten. I...fast. She...shy. He..she..He he...a small. Eh....he smart.* *Time: 1'07"*

4.2 Results for Research Question 2

In response to Research Question 2 "What are Chinese EFL learners' perceptions towards the effectiveness of the two types of treatments on the grammatical knowledge gains of the copular *be* (is, am, are) and their ability to use the copula *be* in

the oral performance", the results of the questionnaires from two groups are presented in two ways: (1) the perceptions towards grammatical knowledge gains about the copula *be*, (2) the perceptions towards the ability to use the copula *be* in the oral performance.

The perceptions of the participants are presented in the form of graphs first, and then some excerpts of the representative comments from the interview are presented to explain and support the quantitative results.

4.2.1 The results of the participants' perceptions towards the FonMF treatment

4.2.1.1 Perceptions of the participants under the FonMF treatment regarding to the grammatical knowledge gains about the copula *be*

Participants' information about their perceptions towards the grammatical knowledge gains of the copula *be* have been summarized according to the three main questions concerning three aspects: (1) perceptual noticing of the copula *be*, (2) noticing of functions of the copula *be*, and (3) understanding of the copula *be*. The results are presented below according to the each of the three questions.

Question 1 Do you notice the colored and bolded words (am, is, are)?

This first question regards the participants' perceptions of the copula *be* that were typographically enhanced. Whether the participants noticed these typographically enhanced words (am, is, are) and how they felt about them. The results are presented

below (see Figure 4.1).

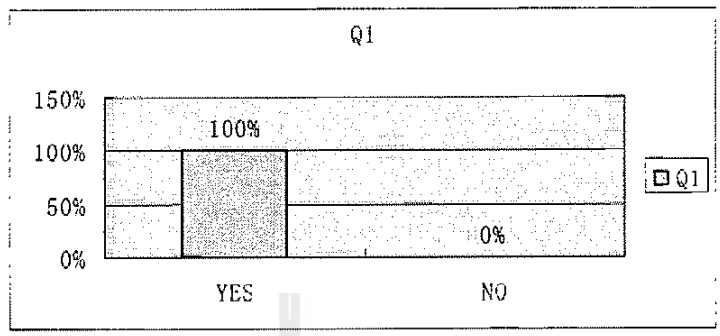


Figure. 4.1 FonMF participants' feedback on the perceptual noticing of the copula *be*

Note: Q1 = Question 1

As shown in Figure 4.1, all the participants under the FonMF treatment (100%) respond *Yes*, which means that they noticed the copula *be* that were typographically enhanced.

Qualitatively, 25 participants among 30 who respond *Yes* commented that they noticed the colored and bolded words (am, is, are) while they were reading the passage, and the other 5 participants commented that they noticed these enhanced *be* before the reading, and they also noticed the verb while reading. The following excerpts of comments from interviews illustrate a representation of the participants' perceptions about the textual enhancement.

> **P5:**
> *I found the target form (am, is, are) look different from the other words, and they appear many times, so I get impressed by these words.*

P7:
These words are very obvious. They look different. I think they must be important, so I have a special impression on them.

These verbal reports suggest that the textual enhancement was successful in drawing participants' perceptual noticing to the copula *be*.

Question 2 Do these activities help you notice the words (am, is, are)?

This second question regards whether the participants under the FonMF treatment noticed how the copula *be* function. The results are presented below (see Figure 4.2).

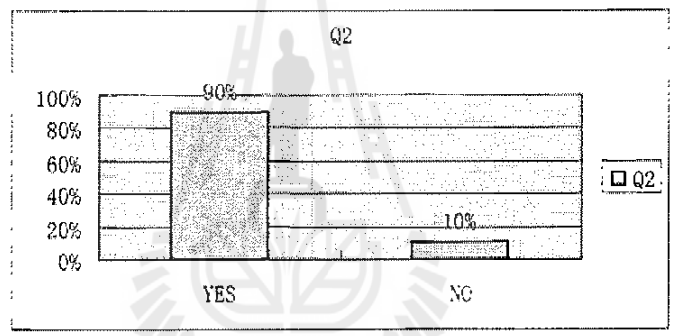


Figure 4.2 FonMF participants' feedback on the noticing of functions of the copula *be*

Note: Q 2 = Question 2

As displayed in Figure 4.2, 90% of the participants respond *Yes*, while 10% respond *No* on Question 2. That is, 90% of the participants thought that they noticed how the copula *be* work through the consciousness-raising activities, while 10% participants did not.

Additional information was found in the interviews. The following excerpts of comments illustrate a representation of participants' perceptions concerned with this question.

Yes:

P6:

I can notice the functions of the words 'am, is, are' by following the activities.

P28:

I notice the functions of the words, following each activity, but I cannot remember all of them.

No:

P12:

Actually, I notice the functions of the target verbs, but I can not remember all of them, so I choose No.

P13:

I think there are too many activities that I cannot remember them well, so I choose No.

P22:

There are too many activities. I do not pay attention to the copula be. I think more about nouns, adjectives and words before and after the copula be.

The three comments made by the participants who respond *No* illustrate that they actually noticed the features of the copula *be*, but they did not correctly understand the question. Hence, they gave *No* responses to the question.

The comments suggest that the consciousness-raising activities are effective in inducing participants to be aware of the features of the copula *be*.

Question 3 Do these activities help you understand how the copula *be* (am, is, are) are used?

This third question regards whether the participants under the FonMF treatment understood how the copula *be* function. The results are presented below (see Figure 4.3).

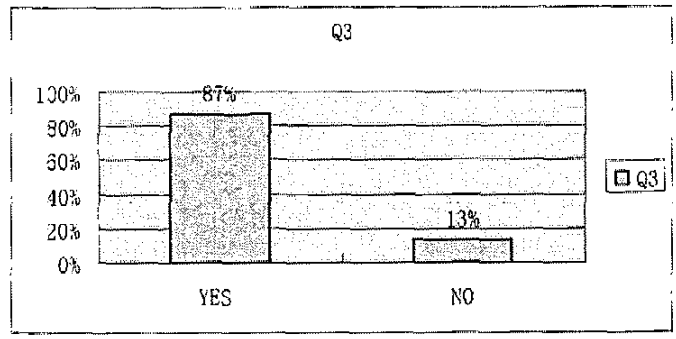


Figure 4.3 FonMF participants' feedback on the understanding of the copula *be*

Note: Q 3 = Question 3

As shown in Figure 4.3, 87% of the participants respond *Yes* and 13% respond *No* in response to Question 3.

The comments from the participants provide more information to help interpret the quantitative results. Of those who responded *Yes*, 87% gave correct examples to demonstrate their understanding of the target verbs in the interviews. It is interesting that 13% of the participants who responded *No* commented that they understood the target verbs to some degree. The reason why they chose *No* was that they were not sure whether they totally understood the copula *be*. The following excerpts are representative remarks to show participants' affirmative and negative attitudes.

Yes:
P6:
I can do the activities. I think it is not difficult. I can follow the instructions. I can understand from the answer key, even if I made wrong answers for some of activities. Following the activities, I understood how the target verbs are used.

P8:
I know how to do each activity and I find how am/ is/ are work through these activities.

No:
P4:
I cannot understand some activities, such as, the activity that asked us to distinguish the words after am/is/are into two groups. I can not understand what the noun or the adjective is. But I think I understand more after I read the answer key.

P12:
Actually, I understand some activities, such as, finding the words after am/is/are, but I feel a little difficult in distinguishing them. I think I cannot distinguish nouns and adjectives other than in the exercises. I understand the use of am/is/are, but I am not very sure if my understanding is right.

These comments suggested that the participants who respond *No* do not mean they do not understand the copula *be*. Actually, their remarks reveal that they have a cautious attitude to the question. They interpreted the question as asking if they totally mastered the concept of nouns and adjectives.

The interview data suggest that the consciousness-raising activities are effective in helping the participants understand the copula *be*.

4.2.1.2 Perceptions of the participants under the FonMF treatment regarding to the ability to use the copula *be*

Participants' information about their perceptions towards their ability to use the copula *be* under the FonMF treatment have been summarized according to the two main questions concerning two aspects: (1) noticing the use of the copula *be*, and

(2) how to use the copula *be*. The results are presented below according to the each of the two questions.

Question 4 Do you notice the use of the verb "am", "is" and "are" when you are giving an oral performance?

This fourth question regards whether the participants under the FonMF treatment noticed the use of the copula *be* when they are giving an oral performance. The results are presented below (see Figure 4.4).

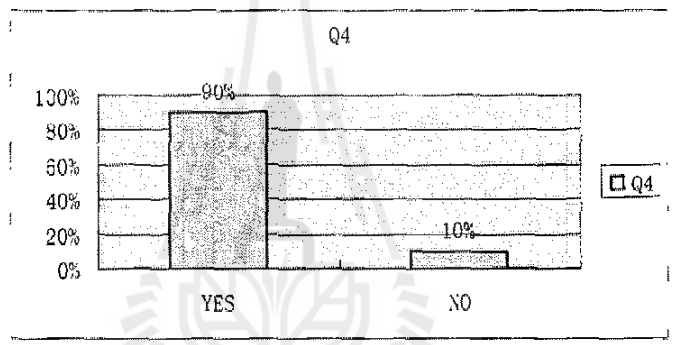


Figure 4.4 FonMF participants' feedback on the notice the use of the copula *be*

Note: Q 4 = Question 4

As shown in Figure 4.4, 90% of the participants respond *Yes* and 10% respon *No* on Question 4.

Qualitatively, 90% of participants in the FonMF treatment commented they thought about the words in Chinese first. Then they connected these words to the sentences. The 10% who reported the reason why they did not notice the use of the target verbs said they were in a hurry. They did not think too much about the sentence structures. They paid more attention to the content. The following excerpts illustrate

representations of the participants' perceptions of the use of the copula *be* while preparing for the oral production test.

Yes:

P4:

First, I think about my name, my friends' names, and the words about appearance and character in Chinese, then I connected these words into sentences. I noticed the use of am/is/are, because I practiced a lot about these words in the activities.

P6:

I followed the instruction. Then I think about the words that I need to use in Chinese. I translated them into English. At last, I connect these words. I noticed the use of am/is/are, because I know when I introduced people, I need to use them.

No:

P17:

I was in a hurry. I forgot. But now I remembered I should use them.

P22:

I thought about how I should introduce myself and my friends in Chinese. When I translated them into English, I thought more on these words. I forgot.

The interview data show that a majority of the participants noticed the use the copula *be* while preparing for the oral production test. Although a few participants gave negative responses stating that they did not notice the use of the copula *be*, but it was found that they still had some awareness of the copula *be*. This suggested that the FonMF treatment is effective in triggering the participants to use the copula *be* in the oral performance.

Question 5 Can you use the verb "am", "is", and "are" to tell about yourself and your friends?

This fifth question regards whether the participants under the FonMF treatment knew how to use the copula *be* to tell about themselves and their friends. The results are presented below (see Figure 4.5).

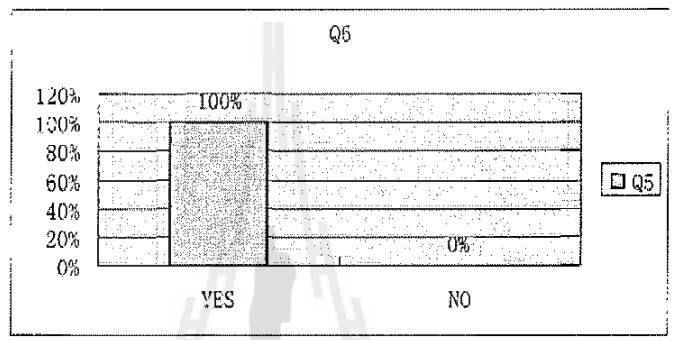


Figure 4.5 FonMF participants' feedback on the use of the copula *be*

Note: Q 5 = Question 5

As displayed in Figure 4.5, all the 30 participants affirmatively respond *Yes*. In the interviews, all of them could use the copula *be* to tell about themselves and their friends. They could give examples in the interviews to demonstrate the mastery of the target verbs. The following excerpts demonstrate representative perceptions of their capability of using the copula *be*.

Yes:

P10:

I could use am/is/are to tell about me and my friends.

P14:

I think it is easier to tell, just following the way that the reading passages teach me.

Based on the interview data, it is found that all of them could correctly tell about themselves in name, appearance, character and the like they learned under the FonMF treatment. It indicates that the FonMF treatment has a role in facilitating the participants' use of the copula *be*.

4.2.1.3 Summary

To summarize, where the FonMF treatment was used, all the participants reported that they noticed the copula *be* by the textual enhancement. A majority of the participants (90%) noticed the features of the copula *be* through the consciousness-raising activity. Although a minority of the participants (10%) responds *No* on this question, their comments demonstrated that they noticed the features. As to whether the consciousness-raising activity help them understanding the copula be, a majority of the participants (87%) responded positively, while a minority of the participants (13%) responded negatively. The minority of the participants were not clear about some of the consciousness-raising activities, such as distinguishing the adjectives and the nouns. Regarding the ability of the use of the copula *be*, a larger number of the participants (90%) could apply the copula *be* in the oral production test, while a smaller part of the participants (10%) could not do it very well, because they focused more attention on the content.

4.2.2 The results of the participants' perceptions towards the FonM treatment

4.2.2.1 Perceptions of the participants under the FonM treatment regarding to the grammatical knowledge gains about the copula *be*

Participants' information about their perceptions towards the grammatical knowledge gains of the copula *be* under the FonM treatment have been summarized according to the three similar questions to those of FonMF treatment concerning three aspects: (1) perceptual noticing of the copula *be*, (2) noticing of functions of the copula *be*, and (3) understanding of the copula *be*. The results are presented below according to the each of the three questions.

Question 1 Do you notice the verb (am, is, are) while you were reading the passage?

This first question regards whether the participants under the FonM treatment noticed the copula *be* (am, is, are) that were not typographically enhanced in the reading passages. The results are presented below (see Figure 4.6).

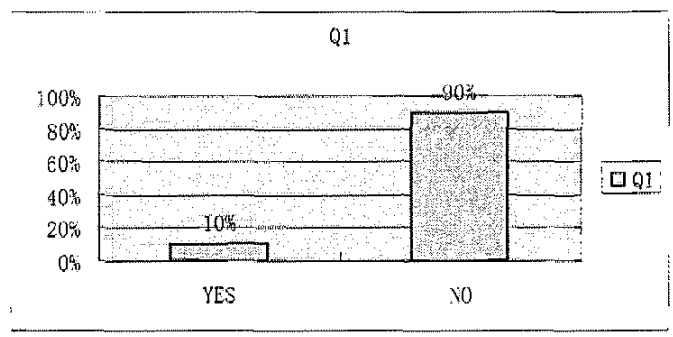


Figure 4.6 FonM participants' feedback on the perceptual noticing of the copula *be*

Note: Q 1 = Question 1

As shown in Figure 4.6, 10% of the participants respond *Yes* and 90% respond *No*. The result demonstrates that only 2 out of the 30 participants in the FonM group visually noticed the copula *be* while they were reading the passages.

Qualitatively, two participants who thought they noticed the copula *be* while they were reading, reported that they had some impression about the copula *be*, but they did not pay much attention to them. The other 28 participants reported they did not notice the copula *be*. That they just read for the content is evidenced by their comments.

> **Yes:**
> **P5:**
> *I found these verbs appeared many times. But I did not think seriously about them. I think more about the content in the passage.*
>
> **P26:**
> *I have a little impression of these words (am, is, are) after reading the passage. But I do not pay attention.*
>
> **No:**
> **P3:**
> *I just read the passage for the content. I do not notice the verb (am, is, are). I don't think about it. I want to know what happened in the passage.*
>
> **P14:**
> *I read and I think if I understand the meaning of the sentence.*

The interview data suggest that the plain passage, without the visual saliency, did not draw participants' attention to the copula *be*.

Question 2 Do you notice the verb "am", "is", "are" when you are memorizing the content of the passage?

This second question regards whether the participants noticed the copula *be* (am, is, are) when were memorizing the content of the passage. The results are presented below (see Figure 4.7).

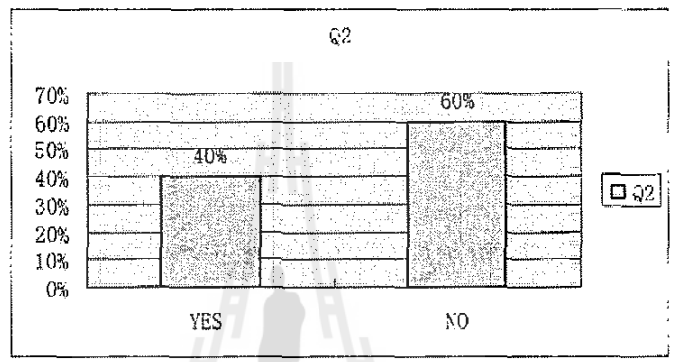


Figure 4.7 FonM participants' feedback on the noticing of the copula *be* in the memorizing activity

Note: Q 2 = Question 2

As shown in Figure 4.7, 40% of the participants respond *Yes* and 60% of the participants respond *No*. It indicated that a small number of the participants thought they noticed the copula *be* while they were memorizing the content of the passages, whereas a larger number of the participants did not notice the copula *be* while memorizing the passage. This is evidenced by the participants' reports in the interviews. However, there are new insights to interpret these results. Some representative comments are included below to illustrate the participants' perceptions in this regard.

Yes:

P5:

I think I notice them, because I tried to memorize each word.

P26:

I have an impression of these words. I read each word and I recite each word.

No:

P1:

I do not pay much attention to it. I tried to memorize the people's name and his characteristics and everything about him.

P29:

I do not notice them, because you ask me to memorize as much information as possible. So I recite the information by the content. I do not recite word by word.

The comments from the participants who respond *Yes* show that they noticed the copula *be* because they recited each word of the sentences. It appears that learners noticed the copula *be* in an unconscious way. They remembered the whole sentence as a cohesive whole.

Question 3 Do you understand the meaning of the verb (am, is, are)?

This third question regards whether the participants under the FonM treatment understood the meaning of the copula *be* (am, is, are). The results are presented below (see Figure 4.8).

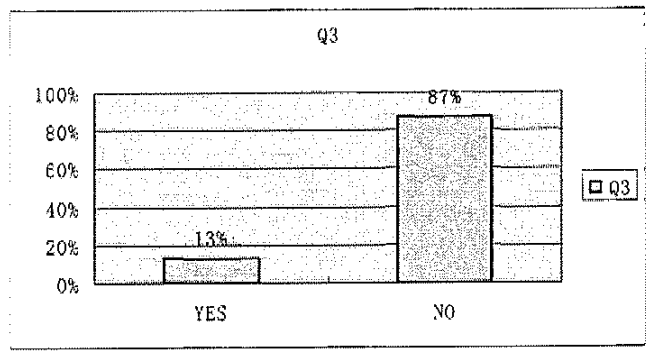


Figure 4.8 FonM participants' feedback on the understanding of the copula *be*

Note: Q 3 = Question 3

As shown in Figure 4.8, 13% of the participants in the respond *Yes*, while 87% respond *No*. The result shows that a few participants thought they understood the copula *be*, while large numbers of the participants did not think they understood the copula *be*.

Interestingly, the reports from the 13% who responded that they understood the copula *be* in the interviews provide some insights worth considering. When they were further asked to tell the meaning of the copula *be*, they did not give the right understanding of the copula *be*. Their understanding of the meaning of the copula *be* was based on the liberal translation of the sentence. They translated the copula *be* in corresponding to a comparable Chinese sentence. The following excerpts show how they understand the meaning of the copula *be*.

Yes:
P5:
I knew the meaning of target verbs. I knew it because I knew the meaning of the whole sentence, so I can guess the meaning from the sentence. 'am' in the "I am happy" means 'very'.

(in Chinese 'very' is translated as 'hen'. However, this verbal translation is not a correct understanding of 'am')

P11:
"I am Charlie Brown". 'am' means 'jiao'.
Wo jiao Charlie Brown".

(in Chinese, 'jiao' means 'call'. Still this is the verbal translation)

No:
P1:
I am not sure the meaning of the target verbs, although I know the meaning of the whole sentence. Actually, I even do not pay an attention to the meaning of the words am/is/are.

P24:
I don't care about the meaning of the words am/is/are. I can guess the meaning of the sentence.

4.2.2.2 Perceptions of the participants under the FonM treatment regarding to the ability to use the copula *be*

Participants' information about their perceptions towards their ability to use the copula *be* under the FonM treatment have been summarized according to the same two main questions as those of the FonMF treatment concerning two aspects: (1) noticing the use of the copula *be*, and (2) how to use the copula *be*. The results are presented below according to the each of the two questions.

Question 4 Do you notice use the verb "am", "is" and "are" when you are giving an oral performance?

This fourth question regards whether the participants under the FonM treatment noticed the use of the copula *be* (am, is, are) when they were giving an oral performance. The results are presented below (see Figure 4.9).

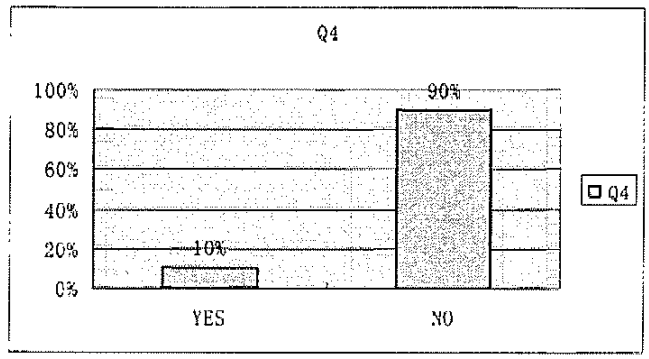


Figure 4.9 FonM participants' feedback on the notice the use of the copula *be*

Note: Q 4 = Question 4

As shown in Figure 4.9, 10% of the participants in the FonM treatment respond *Yes* and 90% respond *No*. That is, a few participants thought they noticed the use of the copula *be* while preparing for the oral test, whereas a large number of participants did not think they noticed the use of the copula *be*.

However, the few participants who responded *Yes* remarked that they did not pay special attention to the use of the copula be, but they had recited the reading passages so that they produced the copula *be* in the oral production test correctly. It suggests that they may use the copula *be* because they memorized the whole sentence and they recited the content of the passages. As to the participants who responded *No*, they commented that they were thinking about the sentences in Chinese first, then translated the sentences into English. They did not think of the use of the copula *be*. It is evidenced in their reports in the following representative comments.

Yes:
P5:
I think about the words that I need first, then I translated them into English. I connect these words. I follow the model of the reading passages.

P26:
I have recited the reading passages. So I just change some words to describe myself and my friends.

No:
P1:
I think about the words that I need to say. I try to translate my Chinese into English.

P24:
I think about my character, my hobby and many things about me and my friends. Then I translate them into English.

From the interview data, it suggests that the participants under the FonM treatment directed their focus on the meaning instead of the form. However, for the participants who reported that they noticed the use of the form, it may be attributed to their better learning strategy and higher capability for learning.

Question 5 Can you use the verb "am", "is", and "are" to tell about yourself and your friends?

This fifth question regards whether the participants under the FonM treatment could use the copula *be* (am, is, are) to tell about themselves and their friends. The results are presented below (see Figure 4.10).

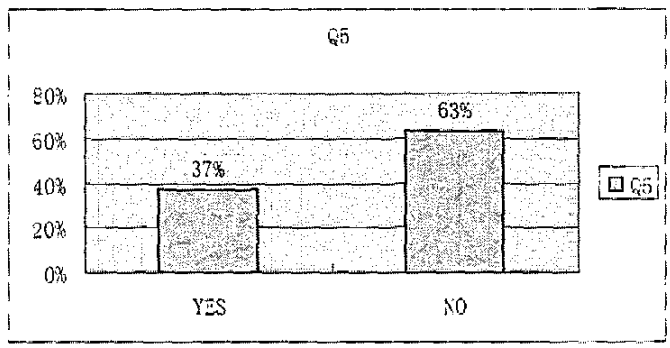


Figure 4.10 FonM participants' feedback on the use of the copula *be*

Note: Q 5 = Question 5

As shown in Figure 4.10, 37% of the participants responded *Yes*, whereas 63% responded *No*. It demonstrates that a small number of the participants thought they could use the copula *be* to tell about himself and his friends, whereas a larger part of participants thought they could not use the copula *be* to do so.

It is also interestingly to note from the reports that the participants who responded *Yes* when they were asked to give examples, they could not produce the right copula *be* sentences. It suggests they did not have the mastery of the copula *be*. The following are representative excerpts produced by the participants who thought they could use the copula *be* to introduce themselves and their friends.

Yes:
P5:
I is Tom. I a student. He are I friend. We am happy.

P28:
I is Jerry. I happy. I a student. I are ten years old.

From the interview data, it is apparent that the participants who thought they could use the copula *be* did not focus on the form of the copula *be*, they merely thought of the meaning.

4.2.2.3 Summary

In sum, for the FonM treatment, a majority of the participants (90%) did not notice the features of the copula be while they are reading. Although a minority of the participants (10%) responded that they noticed the copula *be* while reading, it was discovered in their comments that they had only a slight impression of the copula *be*. Furthermore, as to the question whether they noticed the copula *be* in the memorizing

activity, a larger number of the participants (60%) responded negatively, while a smaller number of the participants (40%) responded positively. The comments from those who responded positively showed the reason why they noticed the copula *be* during memorizing the reading passage is that they recited each word of the sentences. Concerning the question whether they understand the meaning of the copula *be*, a minority of the participants (13%) thought they did. However, their reports revealed that their understanding was not correct. A majority of the participants reported that they did not understand the meaning of the copula *be*.

Regarding the ability to use the copula *be* correctly, a majority of the participants responded that they could not. A minority of the participants (10%) thought they could use the copula *be*. However, it was found that they could not use the target form correctly. It appears that they did not have the correct recognition or ability to use the copula *be*.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the results presented in the previous chapter based upon the existing literature and the theoretical framework of the experimental treatment. Three major findings have been made in the present study. First, a comparatively strong, positive immediate effect of the FonMF treatment was demonstrated. Although the FonM group also experienced a gain in the copula *be*, the increase was significantly smaller than gains obtained by the FonMF groups. The second outcome of the experiment was that the FonMF group demonstated a retained gain in the copula *be*, while the FonM group did not show the significant performance with it. Third, the importance and effectiveness of the input enhancement and the consciousness-raising activities appear to be the causative variables for the significant gains obtained by the FonMF group.

5.1 The immediate effects of the FonMF vs. the FonM treatment

The results of the *t*-tests (Table 4.1 — Table 4.4), presented in Chapter 4, revealed that the participants in the FonMF group, who received focus on meaning and form treatment, achieved significantly higher scores in the grammatical knowledge and the oral production posttest and the delayed posttest than the

participants in the FonM group, who merely received focus on meaning treatment. This finding indicated that the FonMF treatment had positive immediate effects on the participants' gains in the grammatical knowledge of the copula *be* and the ability of using the copula *be*.

5.1.1 The effects of the FonMF vs. the FonM treatment on the grammatical knowledge gains

In the grammatical knowledge posttest, the FonMF group gained a significantly higher mean score of 14.93 (full score = 20) than did the FonM group, whose mean score was only 7.47 (full score = 20). This indicated that the participants under the FonMF treatment had a better mastery of the grammatical knowledge about the copula *be* than did the participants under the FonM treatment.

A number of reasons could be attributed for this difference. First, with or without the visual cues (copula *be* were bolded and colored) presented in the reading texts may contribute to the difference. These visual cues consistently and directly served to make the target form, copula *be*, particularly salient to the participants. The participants' attention in the FonMF treatment was explicitly drawn to the formal properties of the copula *be*, which was evidenced in the data of interview from perceptions of the participants (see Section 4.2.1); whereas the participants in the FonM treatment did not receive any help of visual saliency of the copula *be*, and their attention was drawn to the copula *be* only to the extent that they were provided with an artificially high frequency within the reading text containing the copula *be*. It was

indicated that only a few of the participants' attention was drawn to the copula *be* (see Section 4.2.2). Based on the significantly improved performance in the grammatical knowledge test, it is evidenced that perceptual saliency was key to the effectiveness of the FonMF treatment.

Second, the participants in the FonMF treatment additionally received a much higher level of noticing through consciousness-raising activities on the features of the copula *be* than was the case in the FonM treatment. That is, the participants in the FonMF treatment were guided to discover the functional and semantic connections of the copula *be*, whereas no explicit techniques were applied to draw the participants' attention to the properties of the copula *be* in the FonM treatment. Given that the FonMF participants made significant gains in the copula *be* grammatical knowledge, the participants appeared to have benefited from the consciousness-raising activities. This finding was also supported by the data from interviews to the participants about their perceptions of the consciousness-raising activities (see more details in Section 4.2). As to the FonM treatment, the small gains in the copula *be* seemed to be due to the participants' exposure to the copula *be* frequently used in the reading texts and the further focus on meaning activities (memorizing the content of the reading passages), based on the data in the interviews from the participants' perceptions of the FonM treatment. It was reported by some participants that they have noticed the copula be by the frequency of the copula *be* in the reading passages, and they had some impression of the copula *be* when they were memorizing the content of the passages.

However, the more evidence can only be determined in a future study which would include a control group.

These findings are supported by claims in the SLA literature that "noticing" the features of the target language is essential to second language acquisition.

5.1.2 The effects of the FonMF vs. the FonM treatment on the oral performance

In the oral production posttest, FonMF group gained a significantly higher mean score than did the FonM group in accuracy (7.60 vs. 2.20), complexity (12.20 vs. 5.47) and fluency (Rate A: 51.74 vs. 34.23; Rate B: 47.25 vs. 30.12). The results suggested that the participants under the FonMF treatment had a better internalization of the copula *be* than did the participants under the FonM treatment.

With respect to the level of accuracy, the FonMF group produced an average of 7.6 correct sentences (mean = 7.6) containing the copula *be* (*be* + nouns and *be* + adjectives) in the oral production posttest, compared with the FonM group who produced an average of 2.2 (mean = 2.2) correct target structures.

The results of the oral production posttests showed that the FonMF treatment strongly affected the accuracy of the participants' oral performance, whereas the FonM treatment did not. Majority of the participants in the FonMF treatment like the participant No. 12 could produce the target structures correctly as the following example:

> *I am Wang Ziyin. I am ten. I am a student. I am shy. She is Sun Ke. She is good friend. She is ten. She is beautiful. He is Li Han. He is ten. He is strong. We are good friend.*

Participant No. 12 correctly produced the target structures (be + noun and be + adjective) which indicated that they had the ability of applying these structures into their oral performance.

In contrast, the majority of the participants in the FonM treatment like participant No.7 produced less grammatically accurate target structures than the FonMF group as shown in the following example:

I am Tan Xi. I ten. I a student. I tall. She Lin Jia. She I good friend.

She ten. He Zhang Zhi. He ten. He good. We happy.

Participant No. 7 in the FonM treatment produced a number of utterances which indicated that he had not yet acquired the knowledge of the copula *be*.

There are some possible reasons contributing to the different effects. First, the FonMF participants' notice was frequently drawn to the copula *be*. Such notice included not only the perceptual noticing, but also the deeper noticing of the function of the copula *be*. It was further evidenced that the participants in the interview reported that they had not only noticed the form of copula *be* through the visual input enhancement, but also noticed the functions of the copula *be* through the consciousness-raising activities. It indicated that such notice encouraged the participants to take notice of the use of the copula *be* while they were preparing for the oral production.

Second, the majority of participants in the FonMF treatment were clear about the functions and meaning of the copula *be*, which effectively influenced the FonMF participants in producing the target structures more accurately.

With respect to the level of complexity, the results revealed that the FonMF group achieved significantly higher scores than the FonM group, that is, the participants in this group produced more copula *be* sentences than did the FonM group. Wendel (1997) has suggested that language complexity can be viewed as a general index of language use, since it involves the linguistic means needed to coordinate and/or subordinate ideas. If it is true, it can be expected that the focus-on-form treatment plays a role in enhancing complexity. Because on the example of the production of No.12, it was found that most of the participants in the FonMF treatment could produce varieties of target copula *be* sentences. It appears that the consciousness-raising activities provided guidance for the participants to organize their utterances. In the consciousness-raising activities, the participants were required to discover how the copula *be* functioned. The participants learned that when a person tells his name and age, and describes his appearance, character and status. The participants could applied these into their oral production. Further evidence to support Wendel's (1997) claim comes from the comments from the interviews, which revealed that 27 out of 30 participants reported that they learned how to introduce a person after the FonMF treatment. This indicated that the consciousness-raising activities also had an effect in improving the participants' complexity.

In contrast, 27 out of 30 participants in the FonM group reported that they prepared for the oral performance by first thinking about their real friends and organize the descriptions in Chinese, and then translated the Chinese meaning into

English. Consequently, the results showed that they could not find out the linguistic means to encode their meanings due to their quite low L2 linguistic knowledge. It implied that meaning-oriented treatment did not induce the necessary complexity of language at the starting level of the participants.

With respect to the level of fluency, the results showed that the participants of the FonMF group were more fluent than the FonM group. With a close examination of their oral performance, it was found that there were less pauses and repetition than the performance by the FonM group. The participants in the FonMF group showed more confidence and produced more organized sentences than did the FonM group. The FonM group spoke in a less structured way, as demonstrated by many pauses when they felt doubtful and had difficulty in encoding their meaning.

The reason may be that after the FonMF treatment, the participants have a clearer understanding of how to introduce a person (i.e. to tell name, age, appearance, character, status), so they could speak more fluently, whereas the participants of the FonM attempted to express their Chinese language thought process with their limited English framework.

5.1.3 Summary of the immediate effects of the FonMF vs. FonM

In sum, the FonMF treatment has an immediate positive effect not only on L2 participants' gains of explicit knowledge of the copula *be* but also on their applying the copula *be* in the oral production, whereas the FonM treatment failed to show the effectiveness on the participants' gains of explicit knowledge as well as the applying

of the copula *be* in the oral production. It was further assumed that focus on form (FonMF) may facilitate the oral performance not only in accuracy, but also in complexity and fluency. The results indicated the visual input enhancement and consciousness-raising activities contribute to the improvement of the copula *be* ability. It lends support to the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990) that noticing is essential to second language acquisition.

5.2 The retention effects of the FonMF vs. the FonM treatment

In the delayed posttest, although there was a decrease in both the FonMF and the FonM groups (when compared with the posttest), the FonMF group still obtained greater significant difference than the FonM group in the grammatical knowledge test and the oral production test on the level of accuracy, complexity and fluency (see the results presented in 4.). The results suggest that the FonMF treatment has a positive retention effect on the participants' gains in the grammatical knowledge about copula *be* and the ability to use the copula *be*.

5.2.1 The retention effects of the FonMF vs. the FonM treatment on the grammatical knowledge gains

In the grammatical knowledge test, the participants in the FoMF treatment still retained much of knowledge about the copula *be*. After examination the multiple choices the FonMF participants made in the grammatical knowledge delayed posttest, the results showed that the FonMF participants mostly chose the correct target structures (i.e. the agreement of *be* and the subject, *be* + noun, *be* + adjective),

especially for the structure '*be* + adjective' that most participants in the FonM treatment chose the choice of 'subject + adjective'. It indicates that the FonMF treatment may be the main factor in the participants' retention of the grammatical knowledge. As for the FonM participants, they hardly reflect the knowledge of the copula *be* they received during the treatment as reflected in the multiple choice evaluation. They were confusion in the agreement of *be* and the subject, omission of *be* between the subject and the adjective, both of which indicate that the FonM participants were still meaning-directed and lacked knowledge about the copula *be* after the FonM treatment.

This finding concurs with those of Day and Shapson (1991), Spada and Lightbown (1993) and Radwan (2005) in regard with the retention effect obtained from the explicit learning. With regard to the present study, the visual input enhancement and the consciousness-raising activities appeared to contribute to the retention effects.

First, the finding relates to the issue of noticing. The FonMF participants were provided with the visual input enhancement to raise awareness of the form-function relations on the target structures and with opportunities to produce them in meaningful contexts. It can be assumed that repetitive contrivances to make learners notice the feature during language use would facilitate learning. It follows Schimidt (1990) that the more a target structure is encountered and noticed, the more it will be learned. As to the FonM participants, they only received the meaning-oriented activities and it seems that mere exposure of meaning and frequent of target structures could not lead to the participants' gains in the proper use of the copula *be*.

Second, it relates to the participants' comprehending of the target structure at a semantic and a syntactic level. In the FonMF treatment, the consciousness-raising activities encouraged the participants to find the features of the copula *be*, meaning and function of the copula *be*. Therefore, it might be assumed that the learning gains based on the comprehension of semantic meaning and syntactic meaning of the target structure are more stable in the long term than learning gains based on mere comprehension of semantic meaning of the target structure by the task.

5.2.2 The retention effects of the FonMF vs. the FonM treatment on the oral performance

In the oral production delayed posttest, both the FonMF and the FonM group displayed a decrease on each level of accuracy, complexity and fluency. The decrease in the delayed posttest is a natural process during the L2 learning. However, it is worth noting that the FonMF group still obtained a significantly higher mean score than the FonM group on each level of accuracy, complexity, and fluency (see the results presented in Table 4.4), which suggested that the FonMF treatment had a comparatively better effect than the FonM treatment on developing participants' ability to use the copula *be*.

The majority of the participants' in the FonMF treatment had not forgotten all of what they have learned. For the level of accuracy, it revealed that the participants could remember most of the features of the copula *be* that they had learned (i.e. they did not forget the agreement of the subject and the copula *be*; they did not forget to

add the copula *be* to connect the subject and the adjective). For the level of complexity, they did not produce as many target sentences as the posttests. One of the reasons may be that they thought they had done it before and they felt bored to do it again. What they wanted was to finish the task as soon as possible. It mainly resulted in the decrease in the amount of the target sentences. For the level of fluency, there appeared more repetition and reformulation in their oral performance. However, the repetition and reformulation reflected that the participants are aware of the form, for example, some participants first produced "I tall" and immediately reformulated as "I am tall". It indicated that they were conscious about the form. Generally, the delayed results of the oral production demonstrated that the visual enhanced input and the consciousness-raising activities are the causative variables for the positive retention effects on the FonMF group.

In contrast, for the level of accuracy, the majority of the participants in the FonM treatment rarely produced the sentences with the copula *be*. They produced sentences based on the Chinese meaning in their mind, which may indicate that they have forgotten the copula *be* that they have learned. For the level of complexity, they did not show that they used many target-like sentences. It may suggest that they forget some content words which are used to express the meaning. With respect to the level of fluency, it is assumed that they produced more sentences based on Chinese thinking and as a result, they could hardly express themselves. The results of the delayed oral performance indicated that the meaning-oriented treatment is not effective in the participants' retaining of the accuracy as well as complexity and fluency.

5.2.3 Summary of the retention effects of the FonMF vs. the FonM treatment

To summarize, the FonMF treatment showed retention effects on the participants' learning of the copula *be* both in the grammatical knowledge and the ability to use the copula *be*, while the FonM treatment failed to show such significant effects. The visual input enhancement and the consciousness-raising activities are assumed to be the causative variables for the positive acquisition and retention effects.

5.3 The theoretical framework of the FonMF treatment

In order to determine why the participants under the FonMF treatment improved significantly better than did the participants under the FonM treatment, it is useful to examine the specific elements involved in the FonMF design. These specific elements were developed from the theoretical framework of SLA model by Gass (1997).

The approach to the presentation of materials for both treatment groups was comprehension-based, that is, both groups were directed toward the goal of understanding the reading passage well enough to be able to do some further activities. As to the further processing activity, the FonMF treatment involved two focus-on-form techniques: typographically enhanced (copula *be*) reading passages and consciousness-raising activities in an attempt to facilitate an improvement in raising the participants' noticing and awareness of how the copula *be* functioned, whereas the FonM treatment intended to provide only meaning exposure to English sentences containing with the copula *be* without any efforts to draw the participants' attention to

the copula *be*. Thus, the different treatments results in the significant differences.

Given the significant differences between the two treatments, it could be assumed that the significant effects of the FonMF treatment attributed to two properties that were not involved in the FonM treatment: the visual input enhancement (textual enhancement) and the consciousness-raising activities, which would play important roles in facilitating the FonMF participants' gains in the grammatical knowledge about the copula *be* and the ability to use the copula *be*. The discussion will now move into a detailed accounting of these properties.

5.3.1 The effects of the textual enhancement in the input

Given that the FonMF group made the greater gains in the copula *be* and the participants' reports on the effects of the textual enhancement (TE), the TE technique appear to have facilitated the participants' learning of the copula *be*. Some effects of the TE are found in the present study.

First, TE has a facilitative effect of leading learners to notice the target form, which concurs with the findings of Joudenais et al. (1995), Robinson (1997), White (1998), Williams (1999) and Izumi (2003). The findings suggested an affirmative answer to the noticing hypothesis that input which is perceived is potential material for acquisition by L2 learners (Schmidt, 1990).

It was found that the FonMF participants exposed to the enhanced texts outperformed the FonM participants who read unenhanced texts. Furthermore, the results were supported by the qualitative data drawn from the questionnaires and

interviews. All the quantitative data and qualitative data would provide some justification to the noticing effect of the TE. However, the present study did not indicate that TE has an effect on the participants' further L2 processing.

Second, another effect of the TE found in the present study is that TE may promote the participants to use the target form. This finding seems to run against that of Williams (1999), who investigated the relationship of TE and memory. Williams found that TE had an effect on getting the participants to notice the target structures, but did not effectively lead the subjects to improve their early memory. However, due to many differences between two studies such as in the target form, the participants, the methodology, and the measurement, the two studies are difficult to compare. As to the present study, the participants reported that they found the copula *be* presented in the reading passage looked so obvious that they were impressed by these forms (am, is, are). Therefore, they became aware of these forms (am, is, are) because they thought it must be important. When they prepared for the oral production and during the oral performance, they were aware of using these forms (am, is, are). The participants' perceptions may indicate that TE has role in encouraging the participants to use the copula *be*, which contributes to the participants' gains of the copula *be*. However, Williams (1999) pointed out that the highlighting of target form draws the participants' attention to specific aspects of input, but the improvement of learning outcome does not simply emerge out of early memory but long-term memory. Therefore, the improved performance of the FonMF participants can not rule out the

effects of the consciousness-raising activities.

Third, it was noteworthy that the positive effect of the TE on the participants' comprehension of meaning was found in the present study. This finding may run against the studies of Wong (2000) and Lee (2007), in which the TE was assumed to have negative effects on learners' comprehension of meaning. However, due to differences between the present study and those studies (Wong, 2000; Lee, 2007) in many ways, such as participants, research objects, research design and measurement, it leads to the finding inconclusive. As to the present study, the positive effect of the TE was found in the equal performance of FonMF participants in the reading comprehension activities as of the FonM participants. This indicated that TE did not have a negative influence on the FonMF participants. The FonMF participants understood the copula *be* structures as well as the FonM participants.

5.3.2 The effects of consciousness-raising activities to the intake

Previous studies indicate that mere visual input enhancement is not enough for the L2 learners to process the input into intake and that more evidence of the research is required to demonstrate how the participants process input into intake. The present study attemptes to fill the discrepancy of the previous studies.

First, the C-R activities are effective in promoting L2 learners' awareness (both noticing and understanding), which is compatible with the results of Fotos (1994), Harley (1998), Naashia (2004), Walsh (2005) and Pica et al. (2006). On one hand, the significant results obtained from the grammatical knowledge test and the oral

production test suggested an affirmative answer to the effectiveness of the C-R activities. On the other hand, the participants' comments showed the evidence that the C-R activities enhanced the noticing more on how the copula *be* worked.

Second, it deserved noting that the C-R activities made particular grammatical relationships easier to detect. From the participants' comments, the majority of them could tell how to introduce a person and from their superior oral performance, it suggests that the C-R activities make the participants easily detect how the copula *be* functioned.

Third, the C-R activities have the effects in helping the participants process the input into intake, that is, to help the participants comprehend the copula *be* both at a semantic and a syntactic level. The C-R activities were based on the framework of SLA (Gass, 1997). In this model, it is hypothesized that comprehending an L2 at a syntactic level is crucial in resulting in the input becomeing intake. Hence, if the participants could perform significant gains after the treatment, it can be assumed that the C-R activities did help participants comprehend input semantically and syntactically. The evidence was found via the participants' completion of C-R activities, their testing scores, oral performance and their comments on the C-R activities (see more details in 4.2).

The results provided positive evidence for the effectiveness of the C-R activities put forward by Willis (1996), who proposed that each participant in doing the C-R activities had to depend on his own intelligence to find out how the target structure

work. The C-R activities in the present study consist of a series of steps: (1) to identify the words before (am, is, are) and after copula *be* (nouns and adjectives); (2) to classify nouns and adjectives; (3) to build hypothesis (generalize about nouns and adjectives) and (4) to explore cross-language (find when to use the copula *be* in English). Surprisingly and interestingly, they did not experience major problems with the activities, with the exception of Step 2 in the first treatment session, but it went smoothly in the later two sessions. It suggested that C-R activities were suitable for the young participants, which challenges the claim made by Ellis (2003) that "C-R activities may not be well-suited to young learners who view language as a tool for 'doing' rather than as an object for 'studying'' (p.166). This finding was in line with that of Harley (1998) who proposed that C-R tasks "have a lasting impact on the second language proficiency of learners as young as 7 or 8 years age" (p. 156).

These steps of the C-R activities addressed the aspects of noticing and awareness proposed by Gass (1997), Leow (1997), Robinson (1995), Schimidt (1993), Tomlin and Villa (1994), Gass (1997) and Schimidt (1993) note that noticing played a role in connecting processing of input to intake. Tomlin and Villa (1994) proposed a model of attention that consists of alertness, orientation, and detection. Alertness referred to learners' readiness to select incoming data for further processing. The learners' orientation directed them to particular parts of the data. Detection referred to the registered data in short-term memory. This view of noticing and awareness was expanded by Robinson (1995). He notes that noticing is in the process of awareness

and learners encoded L2 through this process. Leow (1997) also addressed noticing in this way. Hence, these researchers' views are neatly summarized as in Pica et al. (2006, p.311), "noticing plays crucial role in holding on to L2 data in the short term and in making the data available for further processing over the long term. Awareness reflects a deeper understanding of its form, function and meaning".

Drawing from these perspectives, the process from Step (1) to Step (4) demonstrated a process of noticing in a growing degree. The different ways in which the activities drew the participants' attention to the forms that encode word, phrase, and sentence function and meaning have led to further distinctions among noticing an individual form, noticing a difference between forms and noticing the relationship between a form and its function or meaning.

Step (1) reflected the claim that learners first notice the individual form, in which learners needed to identify the words before and after the copula *be*. Step (2) and Step (3) was a reaction to the claim that learners notice a difference between forms, in which the participants needed to sort out the similarities and differences of the proponents about the copula *be*. Step (4) was responding to the claims that learners notice the relationship between a form and its function or meaning, in which learners needed to verbalize the function and meaning of the copula *be*.

The participants' comments lent support in the statistical results and the claims made by these researchers mentioned above about the noticing and awareness. First, when asked whether they noticed the copula *be* through the C-R activities, a majority

of the participants (90%) affirmatively responded to this question. It indicated that the C-R activities effectively drew the participants' attention to the features of the copula *be*. Further, when asked about their perceptions of the activities, a majority of the participants reported that the C-R activities were not difficult and they could follow the instruction. With respect to each step of the C-R activities, 10% of the participants reported they felt it difficult to distinguish the nouns and the adjectives. The reasons might lie in that the learners held a high sensitiveness to the learning item, as indicated in the remarks that "I can understand the distinguishment of the nouns and the adjectives in the passage, but I cannot distinguish the other new words". The comments indicated that the participants were not able to generalize the knowledge they learned. This finding is in agreement with that of Harley (1998), who found that the young subjects in her study failed to generalize the knowledge they acquired about noun endings to new nouns that were unfamiliar to them. The reason might be that the learners need further instruction about the system of the copula *be*.

For another, when asked whether they understood how the copula *be* function through the C-R activities, a majority of the participants (87%) under the FonMF treatment reported positively to this question, compared with a minority of the participants (40%) in the FonM group (interestingly, 40% of the participants in the FonM group reported they understood copula *be*, but they reported an incorrect understanding of the copula *be* in the interviews). As for the remaining 13% participants of the FonMF group who reported negative response to the question, it was found that

they could tell some features of the copula *be*. The reason why they chose *No* was that they just wanted to be 100% for sure of the features of the copula *be*. For instance, one participant reported that "I think the activities are not difficult, and I knew how copula *be* is used after I finished doing them...I knew copula *be* is used to say a person's name, career, status... to describe a person's appearance, characteristics...". Another participant reported that "Doing the activities, I found how copula *be* is used", for example, 'am' is used only after I, 'is' is used after 'he, she...', copula *be* is used to say something and describe something...". These verbal reports revealed that the participants had been aware of the features of the copula *be* through the C-R tasks. It also confirmed the findings made by Robinson (1996) that awareness at the level of verbalizing rules led to superior learning of a complex rule in the rule-search condition.

On the other hand, the comments illustrated the claims made by Ellis (1993) that C-R activities attempt to provide a learner with an understanding of a particular grammatical feature, because C-R task is learner-centered, with emphasis on learning processes and strategies where the learners rely on their intellectual capacities and use their cognitive modes to learn the most important specific linguistic item. It is a process that noticing is leading to awareness about the use of a language structure, without necessarily using explicit rules or technical jargon to help learners discover the rules by themselves. As Ellis (2003) points out that, C-R task has proved to be useful at an initial stage of acquisition, the stage of controlled processing, to trigger the declarative knowledge, paving the way to the procedural knowledge gradually when learners attend to content rather than form.

Fourth, another effect of the C-R activities found in the present study is that C-R can build a functional relationship between linguistic form and its associated meaning representation. For the L1 native speakers, the relationship between linguistic form and its associated meaning representation is computed automatically (Tomlin and Villa, 1994), For example, when a native speaker encounters the sentence "He is Snoopy", he can automatically formulate an meaning representation that his name is Snoopy. However, for the L2 learners, according to Tomlin and Villa (1994), it is essential to let them discern such a relationship in SLA.

In the C-R activities of the present study, the participants were asked to find out the type of words before *am* and after *am*. Through comparison and classification, the participants were encouraged to formulate the functional relationship among *I*, *am* and *Charlie Brown*, *8 years old*, *student*, etc. Finally, the participants got the form (am, is, are) and the associated meaning mapped. Thus, they outperformed in the gains of the grammatical knowledge about the copula *be* and the ability to use the copula *be*.

5.3.3 The effects of the reconstruction activity

The reconstruction activity in the FonMF and the FonM treatment aimed to demonstrate the participants' intake in short memory on the output, according to the Gass' model (1997). It is a process of developing L2 learners' linguistic system.

Through the close scrutiny of the completion of the activity by the participants, it was found that the participants under the FonMF treatment outperformed the participants under the FonM treatment in completion of the activity. It indicated that the prior focus on form techniques had a large impact on the quality of the

participants' output. Hence, the reconstruction activity appeared to be a necessary proponent in helping the participants learn the knowledge and develop their ability of the use of the copula *be*. On the other hand, the participants of the FonM group failed to complete the activity better, which indicated that lack of a focus on form resulted in the failure in learning by the participants.

This finding is in agreement of the studies of Izumi (2002), Toth (2006) and Morgan-Short and Harriet (2006) on the roles of the output. Izumi (2002) examined the effects of the output and visual input enhancement on the acquisition of English relativization by ESL adult learners. The results showed that the participants engaged in output-input activities outperformed those exposed to the same input but without the output activities. Toth (2006) investigated the role of output by comparing the condition of processing instruction and communicative output. The results showed that participants in the communicative output condition performed as well as the participants who received the processing instruction condition. He suggested that output plays a facilitative role in acquisition as well as input. Finally, Morgan-Short and Harriet (2006) conducted a similar experiment as Toth (2006). The results confirmed the previous finding that output has a facilitative role in acquisition.

The present study also confirmed the claims made by Swain (1985) about the 'comprehensible output'. According to Swain, learners need to have opportunities to produce target language output, especially to produce the 'comprehensive output', otherwise learners may produce the output mindlessly. It conveyed the meaning to the

participants while stretching their linguistic resources, which was further supported by the participants' comments on this activity. Most of participants made remarks similar to "I have to spend more time to think about which word is to which picture, the meaning of the sentence and how to write the sentence". Hence, the reconstruction activity in the present study could be qualified as a 'comprehensive output' since it required learners to consider the meaning, form and function of the copula *be*.

5.4 Summary

In summary, regarding the first research question (concerned with the effects of the FonMF and the FonM treatment) and the second research question in supporting the first research question, the findings of the present study discussed above are summarized as follows:

(1) Generally, the importance of drawing learners' attention to the target form—copula *be* was demonstrated: the FonMF participants outperformed the FonM participants both in the immediate gains and the retention gains of the grammatical knowledge about the copula *be* and the ability to use the copula *be*.

(2) It was demonstrated that a range of techniques (the textual enhancement, the consciousness-raising activities and the reconstruction activities) focused the attention of the participants on the form and the meaning of the copula *be* and contributed to the participants' gains of the copula *be*.

(3) The textural enhancement served as visual saliency and was effective in drawing learners' attention to the to the target form—copula *be*. It was also found that it promotes the participants to use the copula *be* and it did not have a negative effects on comprehension.

(4) The consciousness-raising activities were found effective in drawing the participants' "noticing" how the copula *be* functioned, helping the participants comprehend the input semantically and syntactically, facilitating the processing input to intake and in building a relationship between linguistic form and associated meaning representation.

(5) The reconstruction activity may serve as a pushed output. It appeared to consolidate the participants' language hypothesis and develop the participants' interlanguage system.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter consists of three parts. First, it concludes the discussion of the results presented in Chapter Five. Second, it states the limitations related to the present study. Third, the theoretical and pedagogical implications and recommendations for further research are presented.

6.1 Conclusions

An examination of historical influences and previous studies revealed that there is a renewed interest in FonF SLA instruction since Long (1991) proposed the term *focus on form*. In recent years, FonF has gained considerable ground in second language research that supports the effects on L2 learners' language proficiency. However, the FonF methods investigated in most studies are more likely qualified as FonFs (Doughty and Williams, 1998; Williams, 2005), which runs against the tenets of FonF. Furthermore, few studies have demonstrated how FonF is integrated into task-based language learning, particularly in young learners.

The present study developed a FonMF task. Based upon the theoretical framework of SLA model by Gass (1997), the tenets of FonF and relevant literature in this study set out to investigate the effects of the FonMF treatment in comparison with

the FonM treatment on primary-school-age students' learning gains of the copula *be*. Sixty Chinese pupils in a primary school in Southwest China were selected as the participants. They were randomly divided into two groups, with 30 in each. The study employed a quantitative and a qualitative method to assess the participants' learning gains of the copula *be* and their perceptions of the treatments. After the three sessions of treatment, each session being one and a half hours per week, the participants received a grammatical knowledge posttest and an oral production posttest, shortly after which they were given questionnaires and interviewed. Three weeks later, they took the same tests and interviews again. The approval and support endowed by both the participants and the school ensured the successful implementation of this research. The findings from this study were summarized as follows:

6.1.1 Answers to Research Question 1

With regard to the first research question, "What are the effects of the two treatments (FonMF, FonM) on Chinese EFL learners' gains of the grammatical knowledge about the copular *be* (is, am, are) and their ability to use the copula *be* in the oral performance?", the results showed that the participants under the FonMF treatment outperformed the participants under the FonM treatment both in the grammatical knowledge and the oral production in the posttest. Further, the participants under the FonMF treatment maintained the significantly higher scores than the participants under the FonM treatment both in the grammatical knowledge and the oral production in the delayed posttest. The results indicated that the FonMF

treatment had positive immediate effects as well as retention effects on the participants' learning of the copula *be*.

Further insights from the results revealed that: (1) the textual enhancement, (2) the C-R activities and (3) the reconstruction activity contributed to the participants' learning gains of the copula *be* and the ability to use the copula *be*. The textual enhancement had a facilitative effect in drawing the participants' attention to the copula *be*. The saliency and the high frequency of the copula *be* occurred in the reading passage might enhance the noticing degree of the participants. The C-R activities aided the participants in understanding the meaning and function of the copula *be*, which played a crucial role in engaging the input to process into intake. The reconstruction activity pushed the participants to produce comprehensible output that developed their linguistic systems. It can therefore be suggested that the properties of the FonMF treatment provided a strong support for the positive effects of the FonMF treatment results in the participants' learning gains. In contrast, the FonM treatment did not lead the participants to gain as much as the FonMF treatment did. The results showed that although the FonM participants gained better scores in the posttests than in the pretests, the improvement was not significant enough. The findings indicated that lack of a focus on form makes the participants unable to perceive the form of the copula *be* and the functions of the copula *be* by themselves. They learned the copula *be* by chance due to the exposure to the frequency of the copula *be* in the reading passages instead of real understanding of the copula be.

6.1.2 Answers to Research Question 2

Concerning the second research question, "What are Chinese EFL learners' perceptions towards the effectiveness of the two types of treatment on the grammatical knowledge gains about the copular *be* (is, am, are) and their ability to use the copula *be* in the oral performance?", the results generally showed that the participants in the FonMF treatment reported positive perceptions towards the effects of the treatment, while the participants in the FonM treatment did not report any positive attitudes towards the effects of the treatment. The participants' verbal reports of two groups lent strong support to the results obtained in the grammatical knowledge test and the oral production test.

6.2 Limitations

Like other empirical studies, there were still some limitations existing in the design of the present study.

First, with a small sample size, the study was somewhat statistically weak in its generalizations. All the findings must be accepted as hypotheses and in need of further confirmation.

Second, a three treatment sessions covering one and a half hours for each session might have posed a more favorable effect on the FonMF treatment than the FonM treatment, since the previous studies suggested that the implicit learning may take a longer time to take effect.

Third, the study was conducted in a laboratory setting. The variables that could bring negative effects could be minimized. Hence, the effects may not be generalized into a classroom setting, since it is a learner-centered, task-based language learning that is hard to be parallel with a classroom with a large number of students.

6.3 Recommendations

The findings of this study result in several recommendations for FonMF task design, the field of SLA pedagogy, and recommendations for future research. The recommendations of this study are provided in three sections.

6.3.1 Recommendations for the FonMF task design

(1) The successful learning outcomes of the participants in the FonMF indicate that the FonMF task should continue to be offered in the future. An approach to FonMF needs to be integrated in syllabus and curriculum design to encourage EFL learners to observe and analyze language for themselves, that is, to motivate learners to learn for themselves. This is identified as an effective method in both of previous studies and the present study.

(2) The FonMF designed for the study is only one type out of many types of FonMF tasks. The FonMF task could be designed based upon what aspects of the language are to be exemplified for the learner, what purpose the instruction is to achieve and which type of FonMF is best to satisfy these requirements?

(3) The findings indicate that the participants were motivated towards further such activities in the further English course in the classroom. The researcher recommends that reducing the time of instruction and providing additional time for practice FonMF activities in the EFL classroom in order to stimulate the learners' passion for English learning.

6.3.2 Recommendations for the field of FonMF in the SLA pedagogy

The positive results yielded from the present study were all associated with the conceptions of FonMF, the theoretical foundation behind such an approach and the SLA model by Gass (1997). The features of the FonMF treatment were associated with task-based language learning and FonMF presented to the participants. As the participants' learning outcomes and perceptions indicated, learning of the grammatical knowledge and the use of it occurred when the participants were actively involved in the activities and building the connection of form-meaning gradually.

(1) The findings of this research and the literature indicated that L2 learning is closely related to "noticing". Noticing has significant potential for facilitating students' learning. Therefore the researcher recommends implementing a curriculum that includes the textual enhancement to make the target form more salient. Furthermore, the researcher believes when designing tasks for introducing the target forms, consideration should be given to how students become aware of the target forms.

(2) The FonMF task provided the participants with the opportunity to work with the language data personally. Appropriate action should be taken to help the participants find the features of the target language by themselves. In this way, the participants can build the understanding of the target language at a syntactic level, instead of a semantic level only. Participants had the opportunity to practice their newly learned linguistic knowledge in the FonMF task, but having the opportunity to practice and interact with other participants in real time became vital to the success. Therefore, the researcher recommends to assess the benefits of this approach to learning L2 grammatical item. The research findings indicate that the task designed in the present study takes effect on the participants' understanding of the target form.

(3) The research findings indicated that the use of the FonMF task promoted the participants' motivation for English learning, therefore the researcher recommends that a task-based and a well developed FonMF task join efforts to promote students' English learning. In spite of the fact that the traditional grammar teaching method is still widely used, the researcher recommends that an effort to integrate FonMF task into the current curriculum is needed. More importantly, the researcher recommends that the conceptions of task-based language learning and FonMF should be conveyed to foreign language instructors. The findings of this research indicated that FonMF task appears to play an

important role in improving the participants' learning gains of the target form. Only with a better understanding of the potential for the use of FonMF in foreign language instruction, can instructors implement such teaching method changes and apply them to both curricular design and to lesson planning.

(4) Although the positive retention effect was found in the FonMF treatment in the present study, it deserves further investigation to examine its durability.

6.3.3 Recommendations for future research

The findings of the present study indicated that the FonMF approach effectively results in the participants' learning gains of grammatical knowledge of the copula *be* and their ability to use the copula *be*. However, this study did not investigate several issues:

(1) Whether the FonMF task used in the present study is effective in any other subjects, grade levels, or populations since the research was conducted in a laboratory environment. Thus, investigation of other learner's experiences in other subjects, grade levels, and populations can provide a comparison to the effects found in this study and provide practitioners with a better understanding of whether the FonMF task is applicable to other grammatical structures, grade levels, and populations.

(2) A longer time duration is recommended to examine the effects of the FonMF task as well as increasing the reliability of the results, since the time of the treatment session was short and the other aspects of the research are left uncovered.

(3) Further research should investigate learners' interaction in the FonMF task. Whether learners' collaborative learning is more effective than the individual learning. Whether learners' collaborative learning leads to greater gains in the learners' grammatical knowledge gains and the ability to use the grammatical structures than the individual learning does.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Sample Task for the FonMF Treatment

(Revised Version)

Peanuts Gang （花生帮）

Do you know about the Peanuts Gang? You may know the world-famous dog, Snoopy, but you may not know the other guys. Let's learn about them.

(你知道漫画《花生帮》吗？你肯定见过世界著名的狗——史努比，但是你可能不知道漫画里的其他人。让我们来认识一下他们吧。)

Instructions:

You have 5 minutes to read and listen to the passage. Try to understand the meaning of the passage.

你有 **5** 分钟的时间听读下面的文章。尽量读懂文章内容。

Listen and read the text (5 min).听一听，读一读。（**5** 分钟）

Hi! I **am** Charlie Brown. I live in America. I **am** 8 years old. I **am** a student. I **am** a baseball player. My hair **is** blond. I **am** strong. I **am** kind. I **am** shy. Sometimes I **am** happy. But most of time, I **am** sad. I have a lot of friends, Snoopy  , Linus  , Lucy  .

New Words（生词）：

1). baseball player: 棒球运动员
2). blond: 金黄色
3). friendly: 友好的
4). sometimes: 有时候
5). most of time: 大多数时候

Step 2. Reading Comprehension

Instructions (10 min):

Choose a sentence (instead of a word) from the text to match each picture.

从课文中选择一个恰当的句子来搭配每一幅图所表达的意思(注意：是句子而不是一个单词)。

1.

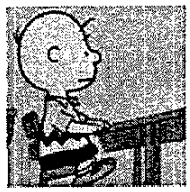
1. He lives in America. √

America. ×

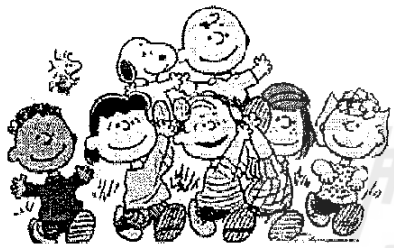
1. _____.

2. _____.

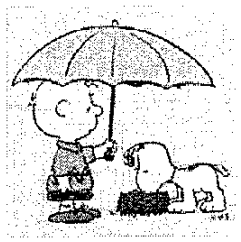
3._____.



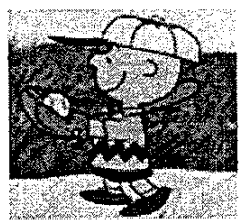
4._____.



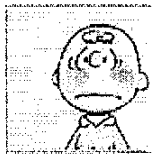
5._____.



6. _____.



7. _____.



8. _____.

Step 3. C-R tasks

Instructions (30 min):

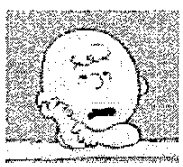
1. Write every underlined word that follows the verb 'am' in the text on page 1:

把课文里每一个跟在 **'am'** 后的划横线上的词写在下列横线上。

_____, _____, _____, _____,

_____, _____, _____, _____,

_____, _____, _____, _____,

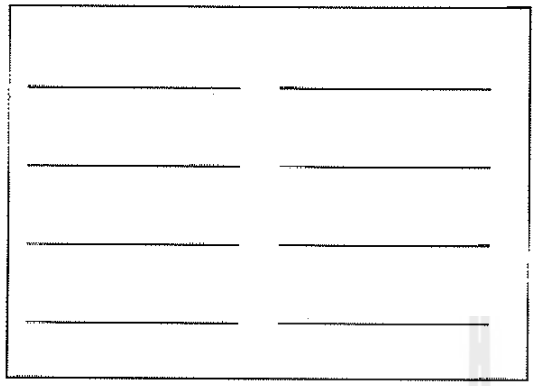


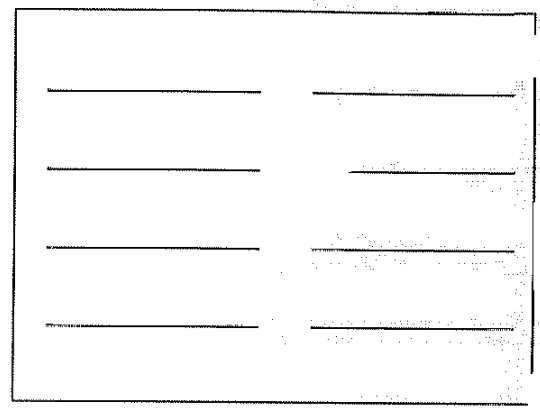
2. Put the words from Activity 1 above into 2 different groups. Write them down:

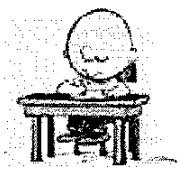
第一题中的词语可以分成两类，想一想，该怎么分，然后把它们分别写到两组中的横线上。

Group 1 （组 1 ）

Group 2 （组 2）







3. Can you figure out the different part of speech between these two groups of words? Put the words in the activity 2 on the suitable line. 现在，想一想，这两组词分别是什么词？把第二题的词填在对应的横线上

1. The group of words are used to <u>say</u> about a person's

这组词用来<u>说</u>一个人的：

Name (姓名): _____

Age (年龄): _____

Identity (身份): _____

Skill (特长): _____

The part of speech of the group of words is:

这组词的词性是：_____

2. The group of words are used to **describe** a person's

这组词用来描述一个人的：

Appearance (外表): _____

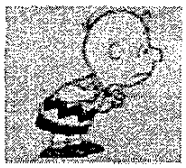
Characteristics(性格): _____

Feeling(心情): _____

Facial expression(表情): _____

The part of speech of the group of words is:

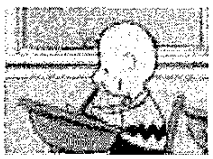
这组词的词性是：_____



4. What is the word before 'am'?

紧靠在'am' 前面的词是什么？

The only word before 'am' is _____.



5. Figure out what people use 'am' to tell:

结合上一题，想一想，英语里'am'可以用来表达什么.（用中文表达）。

1. When people say (当人们说) _____

2. When people say (当人们说) _____

3. When people say (当人们说) _____

4. When people say (当人们说) _____

5. When people describe (当人们描述) _____

6. When people describe (当人们描述) _____

7. When people describe (当人们描述) _____

8. When people describe (当人们描述) _____

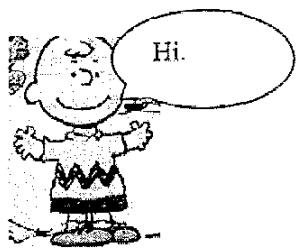
Step 4. Reconstruction

Instruction (10 min):

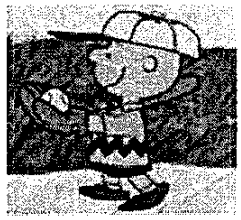
Suppose you are Charlie Brown. Introduce yourself. Choose each word for each picture and make a sentence to describe the picture.

假设你是查理布朗，介绍你自己。选择方框里的每一个单词造一个句子描述一幅图（注意：一个单词只能对应一幅图）。

a student, hot, happy, a baseball player, sad, strong, shy, Charlie Brown

1. 

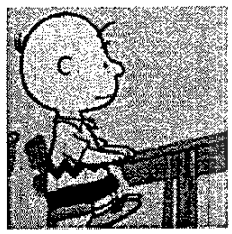
1. _____.

2. 

2._____.

3. 

3._____.

4. 

4._____.

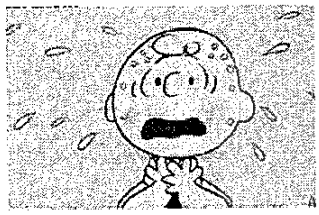
5. 

5._____.

6. 

6._____.

7.  7._____.

8.  8._____.

APPENDIX B

Sample task for FonMF treatment

(Original Version)

Peanuts Gang （花生帮）

Do you know about the peanuts Gang? You may know the world-famous dog, Snoopy, but you may not know the other guys. Let's learn about them.

(你知道漫画《花生帮》吗？你肯定见过世界著名的狗——史努比，但是你可能不知道漫画里的其他人。让我们来认识一下他们吧。)

Instructions:

You have 5 minutes to read and listen to the passage. Try to understand the meaning of the passage.

你有 **5** 分钟的时间听读下面的文章。尽量读懂文章内容。

Listen and read the text (5 min).听一听，读一读。（**5** 分钟）

Hi! I am Charlie Brown. I live in America. I am American. I am 8 years old. I am a student. My hair is blond. I am kind. I am

strong. Sometimes I am happy. But most of time, I am sad. I am fond of playing baseball. I am fond of flying a kite. I have a lot of friends, Snoopy  , Linus  , Lucy  , etc.

New Words（生词）：

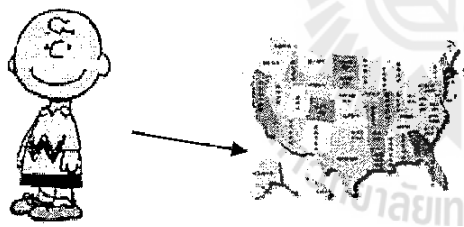
1). blond：金黄色
2). fond of： 喜欢，对……感兴趣
3). Playing baseball：打棒球
4). flying a kite：放风筝

Step 2. Reading Comprehension

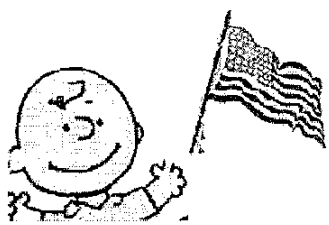
Instructions (10 min):

Choose a sentence from the text to match each picture.

从课文中选择一个恰当的句子来搭配每一幅图所表达的意思。



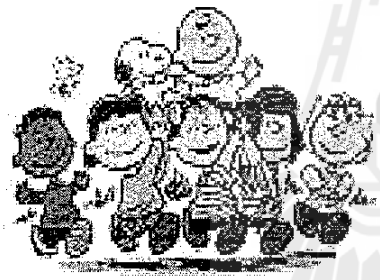
1. _____.



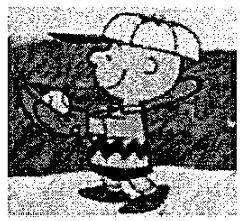
2. _____.

3. _____.

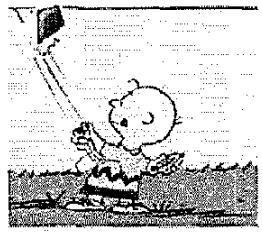
4._____.



5._____.



6. _____.



7. _____.

Step 3. C-R tasks

Instructions (30 min):

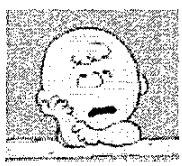
1. Write every word underlined that follows the verb 'am' in the text on page 1:

把课文里每一个跟在 **'am'** 后的横线上的词写在下列横线上。

_____, _____, _____, _____,

_____, _____, _____, _____,

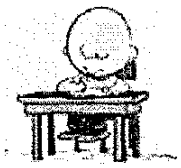
_____, _____, _____, _____,



2. Put the words from activity 1 above into 2 different groups. Write them down:

把第一题中写出的词语分成两类，分别写到两组中的横线上。

Group 1		Group 2	
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____



3. Can you figure out the different part of speech between these two groups of words?

你能分辨出这两组词不同的词性吗？

The words _____,_____,_____,_____,

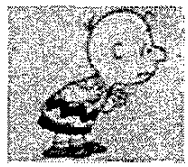
_____,_____,_____,_____,

are _____.

The words _____,_____,_____,_____,

_____,_____,_____,_____,

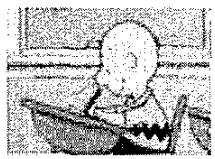
are _____.



4. What the word before 'am'?

'am' 前面的词是什么？

The only word before 'am' is _____.



5. Figure out when people use 'am':

看看英语里什么时候使用'am'. 用中文表达。

1. When people talk about(当人们谈论) _____

2. When people talk about(当人们谈论) _____

3. When people talk about (当人们谈论)_____

4. When people talk about (当人们谈论)_____

5. When people talk about (当人们谈论)_____

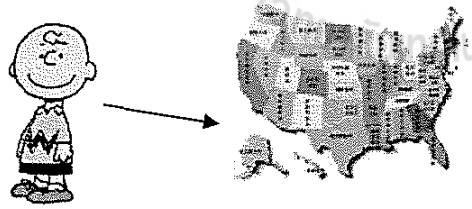
Step 4. Reconstruction

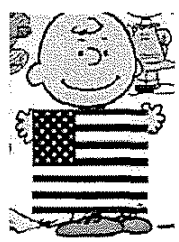
Instruction (10 min):

Suppose you are Charlie Brown. Introduce yourself. Choose each word for each picture and make a sentence to describe the picture. 假设你是查理布朗，介绍你自己。选择方框里的每一个单词造一个句子描述一幅图。

good student, Charlie, America, American, happy, sad, hard-working, sleepy,

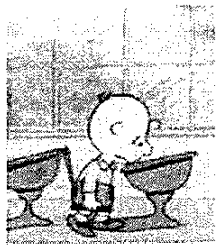
1. 

2. 

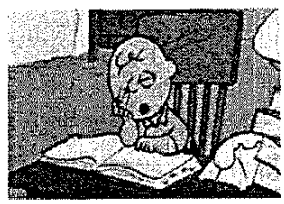
3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

APPENDIX C

Sample Passage for the FonM Treatment

(Revised Version)

Instructions:

You have 5 minutes to read and listen to the passage. Try to understand the meaning of the passage.

你有 **5** 分钟的时间听读下面的文章。尽量读懂文章内容。

Listen and read the text (5 min).听一听，读一读。（**5** 分钟）

Hi! I am Charlie Brown. I live in America. I am 8 years old. I am a student. I am a baseball player. My hair is blond. I am strong. I am kind. I am shy. Sometimes I am happy. But most of time, I am sad. I have a lot of friends, Snoopy  , Linus  , Lucy  .

New Words（生词）：

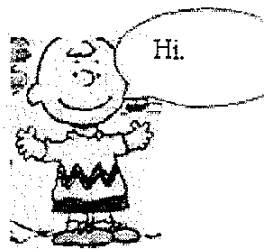
1). baseball player: 棒球运动员
2). blond: 金黄色
3). friendly: 友好的

APPENDIX D

Grammatical Knowledge Test

(Revised Version)

- **Draw a line to match a sentence to the picture.**

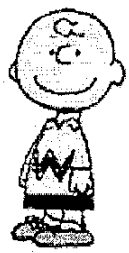
1. 

a. I Charlie Brown.

b. I is Charlie Brown.

c. I am Charlie Brown.

d. I are Charlie Brown.

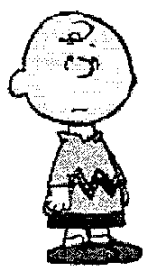
2. 

a. I happy.

b. I am smile.

c. I am happy.

d. I like happy.

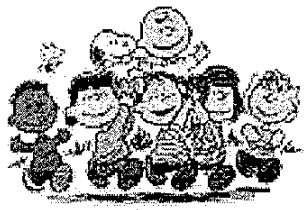
3. 

a. I sad.

b. I am sad.

c. I like sad.

d. I have sad.

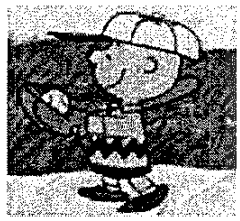
4. 

a. I a lot of friends.

b. I am a lot of friends.

c. I have a lot of friends.

d. I happy with my friends.

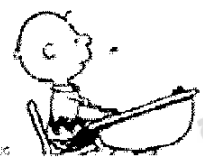
5. 

a. I a baseball player.

b. I is a baseball player.

c. I am a baseball player.

d. I are a baseball player.

6. 

a. I a student.

b. I is a student.

c. I am a student.

d. I are a student.

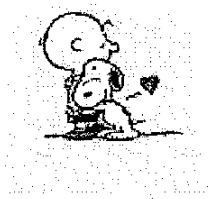
7. 

a. I Linus.

b. I is Linus.

c. I am Linus.

d. I are Linus.

8. 

a. Snoopy my good friend.

b. Snoopy is my good friend.

c. Snoopy am my good friend.

d. Snoopy are my good friend.

9. 

a. He funny.

b. He is funny.

c. He am funny.

d. He are funny.

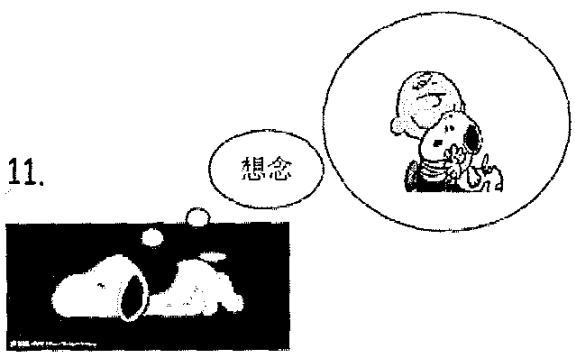
10. 

a. She cute.

b. She is cute.

c. She are cute.

d. She likes cute.

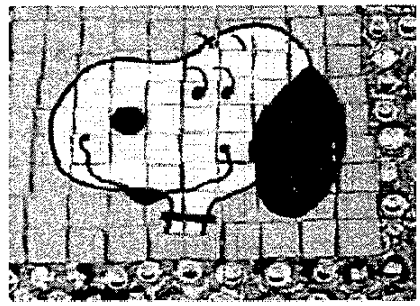
11. 

a. He cool.

b. He lonely.

c. He is happy.

d. He is lonely.

12. 

a. Snoopy dog

b. Snoopy famous.

c. Snoopy is famous.

d. Snoopy likes a dog.

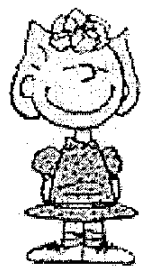
13. 

a. The blanket blue.

b. The blanket is blue.

c. The blanket are blue.

d. The blanket have blue.

14. 

a. Her skirt pink.

b. Her skirt is pink.

c. Her skirt are pink.

d. Her skirt likes pink.

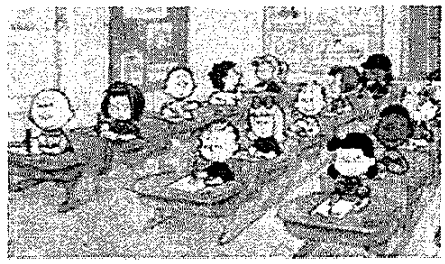
15. 

a. He sick.

b. He is sick.

c. He am sick.

d. He are sick.

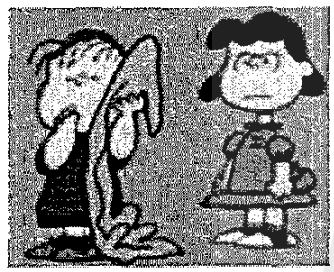
16. 

a. We classmates.

b. We is classmates.

c. We are classmates.

d. We have classmates.

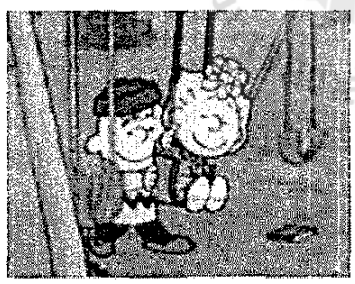
17. 

a. They angry.

b. They is angry.

c. They brother and sister.

d. They are brother and sister.

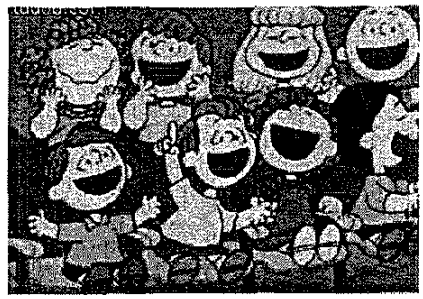
18. 

a. We happy.

b. They happy.

c. We brother and sister.

d. We are brother and sister.

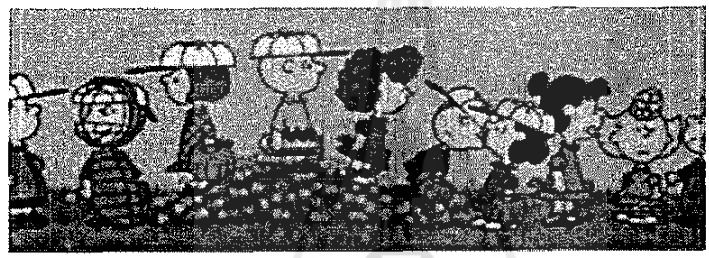
19. 

a. They happy.

b. They is happy.

c. They are happy.

d. The happy friends.

20. 

a. We baseball players.

b. We is baseball players.

c. We are baseball players.

d. we have baseball players.

APPENDIX E

Grammatical Knowledge Test

(Original Version)

- **Draw a line to match a sentence to the picture.**

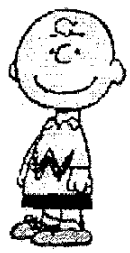
1. 

a. I Charlie Brown.

b. I am Charlie Brown.

c. I like Charlie Brown.

d. I have Charlie Brown.

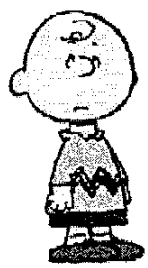
2. 

a. I happy.

b. I am happy.

c. I like happy.

d. I have happy.

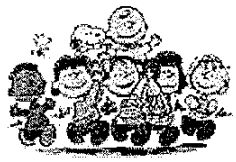
3. 

a. I sad.

b. I am sad.

c. I like sad.

d. I have sad.

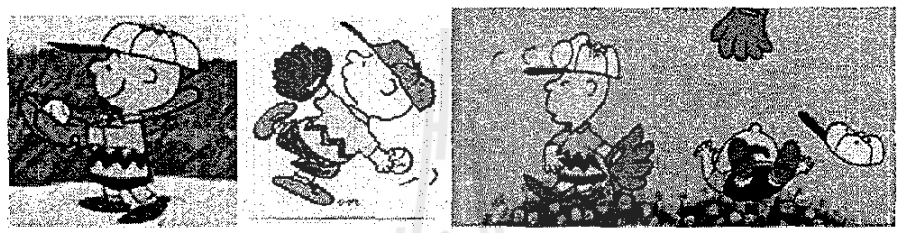
4. 

a. I a lot of friends.

b. I am a lot of friends.

c. I run a lot of friends.

d. I have a lot of friends.

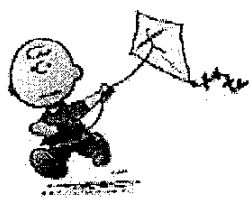
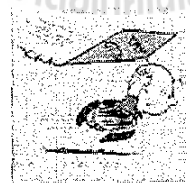
5. 

a. I good at baseball.

b. I am good at baseball.

c. I not good at baseball.

d. I am not good at baseball.

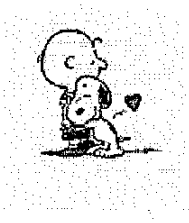
6. 


a. I good at flying a kite.

b. I am good at flying a kite.

c. I not good at flying a kite.

d. I am not good at flying a kite.

7. 

e. Snoopy my beloved friend.

f. Snoopy is my beloved friend.

g. Snoopy am my beloved friend.

h. Snoopy has my beloved friend.

8. 

a. It my beloved friend.

b. It is my beloved friend.

c. It am my beloved friend.

d. It has my beloved friend.

9. 

e. Snoopy is funny.

f. Snoopy am funny.

g. Snoopy are funny.

h. Snoopy has funny.

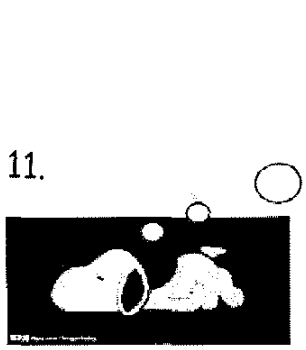
10. 

e. It am cool.

f. Snoopy cool.

g. Snoopy is cool.

h. Snoopy is happy.

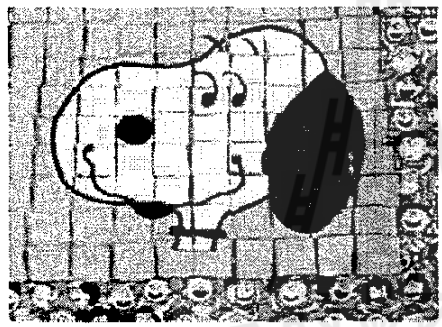
11. 

e. He cool.

f. He lonely.

g. He is happy.

h. He is lonely.

12. 

e. Snoopy is a famous.

f. Snoopy a famous dog.

g. Snoopy is famous dog.

h. Snoopy is a famous dog.

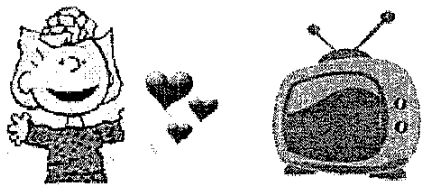
13. 

e. Linus fond of his blanket.

f. Linus is fond of his blanket.

g. Linus am fond of his blanket.

h. Linus are fond of his blanket.

14. 

e. She fond of watching TV.

f. She is fond of watching TV.

g. She am fond of watching TV.

h. She are fond of watching TV.

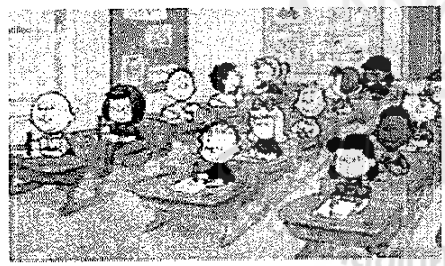
15. 

b. He sick.

c. He is cool.

d. He is sick.

d. He is a sick.

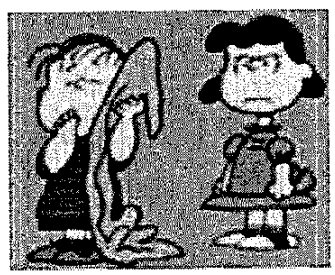
16. 

e. We classmates.

f. We is classmates.

g. We are classmates.

h. We have classmates.

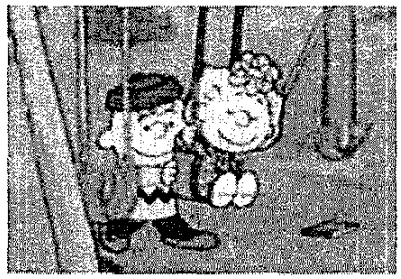
17. 

a. They siblings.

b. They not happy.

c. They is siblings.

d. They are not happy.

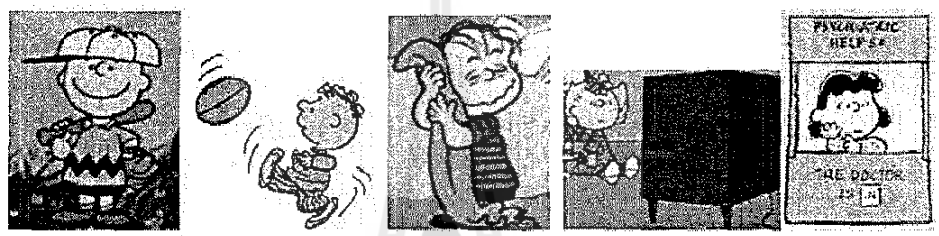
18. 

a. We siblings.

b. We is siblings.

c. We are siblings.

e. We are not siblings.

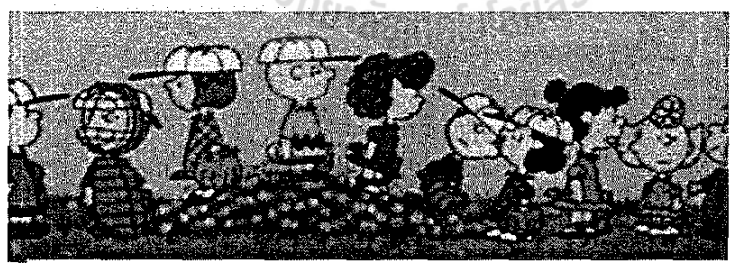
19. 

a. We fond of different things.

b. We is fond of different things.

c. We are fond of different things.

e. We am fond of different things.

20. 

a. They happy friends.

b. They are happy friends.

c. They not are happy friends.

d. They are not happy friends.

APPENDIX F

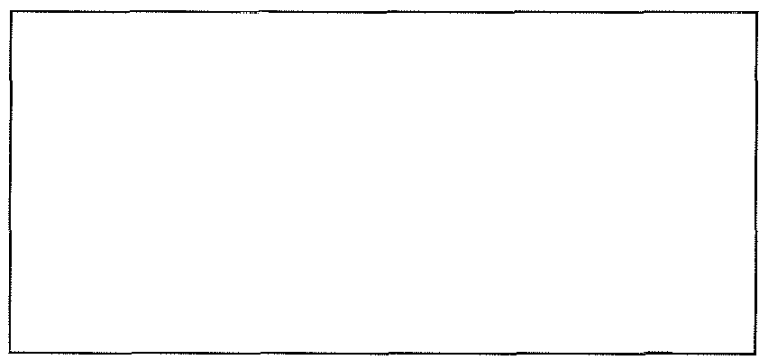
Oral production Test

(Revised version)

Instructions:

You are going to introduce yourself and your old friends to your new friends. The following picture is just a help for you to remind of your friends. Choose at least two of your friends. Introduce yourself and each of them like Charlie Brown did.

现在，你要向你的新朋友介绍一下你自己和你的好朋友们。在下面的方框里大致画一下你，你的一个女孩朋友，一个男孩朋友。然后请一一介绍你，还有你的这两个朋友，然后在总的描述一下你们三个人。就像查理布朗介绍他自己和他的朋友们那样。



Think about what you will say and what language you will need. Tell us about your 想一想你会用到什么单词和语句，告诉你的新朋友下面每个人的信息:

- **Name (**姓名**)**
- **Age** （年龄）
- **Appearance**（外表）
- **Characteristics** （性格）

APPENDIX G

Oral production Test

(Original version)

Instructions:

You are going to tell your new friends about yourself and your old friends or family. Bring a photo of your friends and you or your family album. Introduce yourself and each of them like Charlie Brown did.

Think about what you will say and what language you will need. Tell us about each other's

- **Name**
- **Age**
- **Career**
- **Appearance**
- **Characteristics**

APPENDIX H

Vocabulary Test

Please write the Chinese meaning to each English word.

请写出下列英语单词的中文意思。

live	8 years old	student	hair	strong
kind	shy	happy	sometimes	most of time
sad	a lot of	friend	small	nice
cool	funny	lonely	team	sister
brother	cute	pink	skirt	blue
best	classmate	smart	sick	blanket
game	baseball	altogether		

APPENDIX I

Questionnaires for the FonMF Treatment

(The Pilot Study)

I. Opinion questionnaire for pretest

1. **Do you think each picture is clear? If not, which one made you confusing? Write the number of the picture on the line.**
   Yes No

   Comments:

2. **Do you think the time is enough for you to do the exercise?**
   Yes No

   Comments:

3. **Do you know the meaning of the sentence that you draw to match the picture?**
   Yes No

   Comments:

4. **Do you know the differences of the four choices?**
   Yes No

   Comments:

5. **Do you know why the other three choices are not right?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

II. Opinion questionnaire for task

1. **Do you understand the meaning of the passage after you finish reading?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

2. **Do the colored and bolded words draw your attention?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

3. **Do you think of the colored and bolded words while you were doing the reconstruction activity?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

4. **Do you understand the meaning of the picture and the sentence in the comprehension activity?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

5. **Do you think you understand the differences of the two groups of words after you read the explanations of the answer key?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

6. **Do you think it is easy to describe the picture with the prompt words?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

7. **Do you think you know the meaning of 'am', 'is' and 'are' in each sentence that you write for each picture?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

8. **Do you think the activities help you understand how the 'am', 'is' and 'are' function?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

9. **Do you know how to use 'am' or 'is' or 'are'?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

APPENDIX J

Questionnaires for the FonM Treatment

(The Pilot Study)

Opinion questionnaire for task design

1. **Do you understand the meaning of the passage after you finish reading?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

2. **Do you understand the meaning of the picture and the sentence in the comprehension activity?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

3. **Do you think it is easy to describe the picture with the prompt words?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

4. **Do you think you know the meaning of 'am', 'is' and 'are' in each sentence that you write for each picture?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

5. **Do you think you understand how the 'am', 'is' and 'are' function when you memorize the content of the passage?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

6. **Do you know how to use 'am' or 'is' or 'are'?**

   Yes No

   Comments:

APPENDIX K

Questionnaire for the FonMF Treatment

(The Main Study)

Question Items	Yes	No	Comments and interviews
1. Do you notice the colored and bolded words (am, is, are)?			What do you think about the colored and bolded words? When do you notice them?
2. Do these activities help you notice the words (am, is, are)?			What do you think of these activities?
3. Do these activities help you understand how the copula be (am, is, are) is used?			Can you give some examples on how to use the verb "am", "is" and "are"?
4. Do you notice the use of the verb "am", "is" and "are" when you are preparing for the oral test?			What were you thinking when you are preparing for it?
5. Can you use the verb "am", "is", and "are" to tell about yourself and your friends?			Can you give some examples of telling yourself and your friends?

APPENDIX L

Questionnaire for the FonM Treatment

(The Main Study)

Question Items	Yes	No	Comments
2. Do you notice the verb (am, is, are) while you were reading the passage?			What do you think of them?
2. Do you notice the verb "am", "is", "are" when you are memorizing the content of the passage?			What do you think of them when you are reading and doing activities?
3. Do you understand the meaning of verb (am, is, are)?			What do you think of them?
4. Do you notice use the verb "am", "is", "are" when you are giving an oral performance?			What were you thinking when you are preparing for it?
5. Can you use the verb "am", "is", and "are" to tell about yourself and your friends?			Can you give some examples of telling yourself and your friends?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Fei Wang was born on April 16, 1980 in Guiyang, China. She graduated from Guizhou University in 2002 with the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature. Within the same year, she passed the National Entrance Examination for Postgraduate and studied her Master degree in School of English, College of Foreign Languages, Guizhou University. Having completed all the courses and thesis prescribed in the teaching program, she was awarded the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature in 2005.

Upon graduation from Guizhou University in 2005, Fei Wang has been enrolled in the Ph.D. program of English Language Studies in School of English, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. Her research field is task-based language learning. In 2007, Fei Wang started her working experience in Guizhou University. She is presently a lecturer in College of Foreign Languages.